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THE ENTHUSIASTICAL CONCERNS OF DR. HENRY MORE

Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion

BY

DANIEL FOUKE



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To my parents, Durhl and Evelyn Fouke, without whom nothing.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. A Brief Sketch of More's Life and Writings.....	1
1.2. The Rise of Anti-enthusiasm	5
1.3. Methodological Problems for the Historian of Philosophy.....	9
CHAPTER TWO. THEORY, NARRATIVE, AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS.....	18
2.1. The Construction of a Spiritual Crisis	18
2.2. The Philosophical Poems: Their Linguistic Modes and Theoretical Order	22
2.3. Deity	27
2.4. Cosmogonic Processes: Creation, Emanation, and God's Body.....	29
2.5. The Human Soul	35
2.6. Normativity.....	39
2.7. Religious Meaning and the Interpretation of Experience.....	41
2.8. Conclusion	47
CHAPTER THREE. THOMAS VAUGHAN AND THE ALCHEMICAL WORLD.....	50
3.1. Introduction.....	50
3.2. Thomas Vaughan on the Deity and Cosmogenesis	53
3.3. Spirit and Matter	62
3.4. Alchemical Psychology	68
3.5. Normativity.....	71
3.6. Imagination, the Passions, and Power.....	86
3.7. Alchemical Language	91
3.8. Conclusion	94

CHAPTER FOUR. ALCHEMY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ENTHUSIASM.....	96
4.1. Introduction	96
4.2. The Religious Meaning of Human Experience	103
4.2.1. Deification and the Meaning of the Passions	104
4.2.2. Religious Qualities of the Natural Order	106
4.3. Linguistic Ideals	113
4.4. The Diagnosis and Cure of Enthusiasm	119
4.5. Conclusion	124
CHAPTER FIVE. POLITICAL ENTHUSIASM: THE QUAKERS AND RELIGIOUS RADICALISM.....	130
5.1. Introduction	130
5.2. Religious Doctrines and the Participatory Language of the Quakers	133
5.2.1. Implicit Metaphysical Models	133
5.2.2. The Meaning and Use of Biblical Narratives.....	135
5.2.3. Inner Light.....	136
5.3. The Religious Experience of the Quakers	138
5.4. Social Action: Becoming Messengers and Prophets ...	140
5.5. The Meaning of the Body and the Passions	143
5.6. Public Reaction to the Quakers	147
5.7. More's Criticism of the Quakers	151
5.7.1. The Meaning of Scriptural Narratives.....	152
5.7.2. Reason, Moral Psychology, and the Inner Light.....	156
5.8. Physiology, Moral Psychology, and Insanity.....	167
5.9. True Enthusiasm and Melancholy Enthusiasm	170
5.10. More and Conway	175
5.11. Conclusion	177
CHAPTER SIX. PNEUMATOLOGY AND MECHANICAL ENTHUSIASM....	181
6.1. Introduction	181
6.2. More's Assessments of Descartes.....	184
6.3. Pneumatology and Mechanical Enthusiasm.....	187
6.4. Pneumatology and the Natural Order	192
6.4.1. The Concept of Spirit.....	194
6.4.2. Emanation and the Vital Union of Spirits with Matter	197

6.4.3. Pneumatology and Divine Governance: The Spirit of Nature and the Providential Order	204
6.4.4. Pneumatology and the Organic Universe	208
6.5. Conclusion	215
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	219
Bibliography	235
Index	255

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My debts to two scholars will be obvious. Portions of Chapter 2 build extensively upon the work of Robert Crocker in his unpublished dissertation, *An Intellectual Biography of Henry More (1614-87)*, which contains the most complete examination of More's *Philosophical Poems*. Chapter 6 draws repeatedly upon the pioneering work of Alan Gabbey. Alan Gabbey's presentations on Henry More at a summer workshop on early modern philosophy sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities were also responsible for inspiring my initial interest in Henry More.

I also wish to thank Dan Garber and Alan Gabbey for looking over earlier versions of this manuscript and for their encouragement. I also owe a large debt to Roger Ariew whose advice and encouragement often gave me direction. Thanks, too, to my wife Barbara for her careful reading of the final version of the manuscripts and her helpful suggestions.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. A BRIEF SKETCH OF MORE'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

Henry More was born to Calvinist gentry in October 1614.¹ His education was directed by his uncle, Gabriel More, who was a Fellow of Christ's College in Cambridge. More entered Eton at the age of 14 and Christ's College in 1631, where he studied under Robert Gell. According to More's description of his early religious life, even from a young age he was involved in religious controversy. He tells of conflicts with his uncle over the doctrine of predestination, and of how disenchantment with scholastic metaphysics led him to a study of Platonic and mystical literature and, eventually, to a religious experience, which (as I will argue later) was one of the most formative events of his life. It was to express the character of this experience that he composed his first published work, *Psychodia Platonica*, a philosophical poem which first appeared in 1642.

In 1639 More was appointed a Master of Arts and a deacon. In 1641 he was ordained and also assumed a Fellowship vacated by Robert Gell² and began taking students. He remained at Christ's College for the rest of his life. More seems to have been deeply influenced by Gell and Joseph Mede,³ who were both interested in ancient Greek mystical philosophy. Gell believed in the per-

¹ This biographical sketch draws primarily upon Ward 1710 and Crocker 1986 and 1990c which should be consulted for a more detailed account.

² Robert Gell (1595-1665) graduated from Christ's College (BA 1617-8, MA 1621, BD 1628, DD 1641), and was a Fellow from 1623. Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he frequently preached before the University of Cambridge. He was interested in astrology and preached twice before the Society of Astrologers. At his death he was rector of Saint Mary (*DNB*).

³ Joseph Mede (1586-1638) was admitted to Christ's College in 1602, completed his MA in 1610, and was elected Fellow in 1613. A correspondent of Samuel Hartlib, his posthumous fame rests on his interpretation of the *Apocalypse* which assumes that the various visions described in that book form a chronological sequence, and that the "day" of judgment is preceded by the resurrection of the martyrs and their admission to heaven, and extends over a period of 1,000 years (*DNB*).

fectibility of the soul—a view which became central to More's account of human deification.

Early in his career More also became closely associated with important scientific reformers. He was a friend of Samuel Hartlib,⁴ through whom he became acquainted in the 1640's with Robert Boyle and John Beale. It was at Hartlib's urging that, in 1648, More entered into correspondence with Descartes, whose lofty meditative approach to natural philosophy More preferred over the "slibber-sauce" empirical methods of the experimentalists.

In 1650, eight years after the publication of *Psychodia Platonica*, More entered a polemical exchange with the alchemist Thomas Vaughan. More accused Vaughan of enthusiasm, and with this attack launched an anti-enthusiastical crusade to discredit the more strident and radical reformers on moral, religious, and medical grounds. More's first systematic exposition of his philosophy in prose was *An Antidote Against Atheisme* (1653), which was followed by *Conjectura Cabbalistica* (1653), *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1653), and *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659). These works were revised and republished together, along with his correspondence with Descartes, in *A Collection of Philosophical Writings* (1662). In 1671, More published *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*, which he originally intended to be the first part of a larger work in which he would set forth his complete metaphysical system. But More changed his mind when, in 1679, he published his *Opera Omnia*, a work in three volumes, the second volume of which was an expanded version of the *Collection* in Latin. More was apparently satisfied that the *Opera Omnia* completed the system he had begun to set out in the *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*.

In the *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* More extended accusations of "enthusiasm" to strict mechanists who attempted to explain natural phenomena without recourse to spiritual causes. How far he had moved away from his initial fascination with Descartes is apparent from his lengthy attack on the explanatory sufficiency of the Mechanical Philosophy and from the fuller development of his

⁴ Samuel Hartlib (d. 1670) was the son of a Polish merchant. In 1628 he moved to England where he became a friend of Milton. Although by profession a merchant, he introduced the writings of Comenius to England and published many pamphlets on education and husbandry. Milton's treatise on education was addressed to Hartlib (*DNB*). For Hartlib's importance to English Chemistry see Wilkenson 1968 and 1970.

pneumatology, or science of spirits, as a necessary adjunct to mechanical explanations of natural phenomena. More was an early member of the Royal Society, although not a very active one,⁵ but the *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* marked the first time he made a serious effort to use experimental results in support of his philosophy. Without approval, he made use of Boyle's experiments with the air-pump to support the existence of spirits and the Spirit of Nature. This led to a famous controversy with Boyle about the meaning of his own experiments.

When, in 1660, More published *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (a severe attack on the "enthusiasm" of the Quakers and other religious radicals) it provoked Joseph Beaumont, who has been described as a leading "loyalist, Laudian and theological conservative,"⁶ to accuse More of heresy, first in a circulated manuscript and then in print with *Some Observations upon the Apologie of Dr. Henry More* (1665).⁷ According to Robert Crocker, conservative opposition to More was partly due to the attempt of newly reinstated theological conservatives to reestablish the scholastic curriculum.⁸ More only avoided losing his place at Christ's College through the influence of his patrons, the Conways and the Finchs, and through the effectiveness of his public response in *The Apology of Dr. Henry More ...* (1664). Further conflict with the conservatives occurred in 1668, when More sought to publish the *Divine Dialogues*—a summary of his philosophy and theology. The publication of the two volumes of the *Dialogues* was briefly delayed because of the intervention of Samuel Parker, the Archbishop's censor, who had attacked More himself along with other Cambridge Platonists in his *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie* (1666).⁹

⁵ Hunter 1981, 37.

⁶ Crocker 1990c, 15, n. 54.

⁷ Joseph Beaumont (1616-1699) attended Peterhouse College, Cambridge (BA 1634, Fellow 1636, MA 1638). In 1644 he was among the royalist Fellows ejected from Cambridge. At the Restoration he was granted a DD (1660) and became one of the King's chaplains. Interestingly, he wrote an epic poem on *Psyche* which appeared in 1648, before More published his poetry. In this poem soul is led by divine grace and her guardian angel through various temptations to eternal happiness (*DNB*). Other influential conservatives who attacked More, accusing him of heterodoxy, were Herbert Thorndike (1598-1672), Anthony Sparrow (1612-1685) and Peter Gunning (1614-1684).

⁸ Crocker 1990c, 7.

⁹ Samuel Parker (1640-1688) attended Wadham College, Oxford (BA 1659), and transferred to Trinity College (MA 1663). In June of 1670 he became Archdeacon-

Towards the end of his life, More undertook the arduous task of translating all his works into Latin, which prevented him from writing new works; but in the 1670's he began to set in order the results of many years of studying biblical prophecies.¹⁰ During this time More also entered into a close collaboration with Joseph Glanvill in gathering testimonials to the activity of witches, ghosts, and demons in order to provide empirical evidence for the existence of spirits and supernatural events. These (along with More's *Easie, True and Genuine Notion and Explication of the Nature of a Spirit* and a rebuttal of Richard Baxter's criticisms of his pneumatology) were published in Joseph Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions* (1681).

More's importance should already be apparent from this brief biography. He corresponded with Descartes and was instrumental in introducing his philosophy to England. More, along with his friends, Ralph Cudworth and John Ray, established the argument from design in a more prominent role not only in theology, but in natural philosophy—a prominence increased by its later role in biology.¹¹ More was a vocal and influential part of the anti-enthusiasm of the seventeenth century which deeply affected the temperament of English society. His criticisms of the Mechanical Philosophy and his views on space, active powers, and atoms have been linked to Newton's natural philosophy.¹² He was friends with such important figures as Francis Mercury van Helmont, Anne Conway, Samuel Hartlib, Joseph Glanvill,¹³ Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton,

of Canterbury. He wrote constantly to criticize the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Hobbes, as well as to attack the Puritans. He wrote on ecclesiastical history and political science. An Erastian, his chief work, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie, wherein the authority of the Civil Magistrate over the Consciences of Subjects in Matters of Religion is asserted; the Mischiefs and Inconveniences of Toleration are represented, and all Pretenses pleaded in behalf of Liberty of Conscience are fully answered* (London: 1670), accepted Hobbes' doctrine of sovereignty (DNB).

¹⁰ Some of this work on prophecy, especially on the book of *Daniel* and the *Apocalypse*, had found its way into his earlier publications: *The Mystery of Godliness* (1660) and *The Mystery of Iniquity* (1664).

¹¹ For a discussion of later relations between the argument from design and biological theory, which, while somewhat tangential to my subject, is nonetheless interesting, see Gould 1993.

¹² The literature is too vast to cite all the studies which have linked More to Newton, but the following are a few: McMullin 1978, 43, 79, 134; Koyré [1965] 1968 87; Westfall [1980] 1984, 97; McGuire 1966, idem 1968, idem 1977.

¹³ Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680) graduated from Exeter College, Oxford (BA 1655), moved to Lincoln College (MA 1658), and later became chaplain to Fran-

Ralph Cudworth, Edward Stillingfleet,¹⁴ and John Norris.¹⁵ His theological and philosophical concerns were conveyed into the next century by theologians like Henry Hallywell and Edmund Elys, and his pneumatology was made use of by John Ray and Thomas Robinson. More also assumes importance because of the uses to which his writings were adapted in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. More, along with Tillotson and Chillingworth, was frequently quoted by “deists” such as Anthony Collins and Matthew Tindal,¹⁶ who employed More’s rhetoric about the importance of rejecting enthusiasm for “rational” religion in order to attack central doctrines of orthodox Anglicanism and to argue for purging Christianity of its “mysteries.”¹⁷ More’s anti-enthusiastical writings were republished in the eighteenth century as weapons against the Methodists.

1.2. THE RISE OF ANTI-ENTHUSIASM

More’s first direct attack on enthusiasm was published in the early 1650’s in his criticisms of the alchemical writings of Thomas Vaughan. They were written then after the chaos of the English civil wars and during the turbulence of the Interregnum, both of

cis Rous (one of Cromwell’s lords) and provost of Eton. In 1659 he returned to Oxford. He was elected a fellow to the Royal Society in 1664 (*DNB*). An admirer of the Cambridge Platonists, he closely collaborated with More in an attempt to provide documentary evidence of the spiritual realm by gathering testimonies about ghosts and other supernatural phenomena.

¹⁴ Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699), who was to become bishop of Worcester, graduated with a BA from St. John’s College, Cambridge where he became a Fellow in 1653. In his first book, *The Irenicum* (1659, 2nd ed. 1662), he suggested a compromise between the established church and the Presbyterians. Although he later disavowed these views, this book was influential among the “Latitude-men.” His *Origines Sacrae* (1662) provided an historically based apologetic for the divine authority of Scripture. Late in his life he engaged in a famous controversy with John Locke concerning the doctrine of the Trinity (*DNB*).

¹⁵ John Norris (1657-1711) graduated from Exeter College, Oxford (BA 1680, MA 1684). From 1683 to 1684 he corresponded with More. In 1692 he was appointed rector of Bemmerton. He also corresponded with Mary Astell and Lady Masham. He attacked the Quakers for their “gross notion” of the inner light and replied to John Toland’s attack on the Christian mysteries. His chief work, *Essay towards the Theory of an Ideal and Intelligible World*, which appeared in two parts in 1701 and 1704, showed him to be a disciple of Malebranche.

¹⁶ For example, Collins [1713] 1965, 77-78 and Tindal [1730] 1967, 136-7, 314.

¹⁷ For what is still the best account of this now well known story see Stephen [1876] 1949, especially pp. 74-90.

which have been dramatically documented by Christopher Hill who, along with many others, has established complex relationships between the religious and political radicalism of the period.¹⁸ To More, as well as to many others, it seemed that the only way to restore order was to silence, discredit, or control the voices of religious radicals who disturbed political, social, and religious order by claiming divine authority for drastic reform. To this purpose, More developed his theory that the religious experiences of the radicals were delusions produced both by moral defects and by physiological causes which affected the mind. To say that this anti-enthusiasm had a political character is not to say that the motives behind it were merely political. More's theory of enthusiasm was also a vehicle for expressing his understanding of the spiritual life and of the spiritual qualities of the world.

More's diagnosis of the symptoms, causes, and cure of enthusiasm seized the imaginations of many English thinkers because of the grounds it provided for dismissing not only disturbers of religious and political stability, but dissenters from every form of accepted orthodoxy. The social turbulence England underwent produced an increasing suspicion not only of claims to direct inspiration or illumination by God, but of passion and the imagination as these were associated with religious radicalism.¹⁹ The anti-enthusiastical movement which More helped initiate eventually sought to purge "enthusiasm" not only from religion and politics, but from natural philosophy, rhetoric, and literature as well.²⁰

While More did much to focus the attention of his generation on new applications of theories of enthusiasm, he was far from the first to discuss the disease. Enthusiasm had a long and complex history. In ancient times 'enthusiasm' could refer to either religious or poetic inspiration (*furor poeticus*).²¹ The pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata Physica* established a physiological basis for inspiration by tracing its cause to melancholy, which produced benign effects (such as divinatory, poetic, philosophical, or oratorical power)

¹⁸ Hill [1972] 1991.

¹⁹ Distrust of the passions was not, however, new to the seventeenth century. Renaissance moralists followed the principle of classical ethics that virtuous conduct is motivated by reason, whereas conduct motivated by unregulated passion is vicious (Babb [1951] 1965, 17).

²⁰ Schaffer 1987; Heyd 1981, 263-265.

²¹ Delatte 1934, 5-79.

when moderately heated. However, pathological symptoms comparable to drunkenness were produced when black bile, a component of melancholy, became excessive in quantity or heat.²² Most treatments of melancholy during the Classical and Medieval periods focused on its pathological effects.

Renaissance psychology retained a strongly physiological component, emphasizing the efficient and material causes of psychological phenomena and concerning itself with physical processes involving animal spirits as well as the organs in which these processes were located. Along with other Renaissance philosophers, Ficino took up an old tradition of examining the organic causes of mental illness. His discussion of melancholy,²³ like those of his predecessors, described symptoms ranging from depression and hallucination to creativity and genius, but it generated a fascination with applying physiological psychology to mental pathology and health, as well as genius, which yielded many works on these subjects up to the early seventeenth century.²⁴ As Heyd points out, it was Ficino who, in the fifteenth century, revived the emphasis on *furor* as a divine frenzy, while at the same time retaining the theory that it had a physiological basis in melancholy.²⁵

The ambivalence in discussions of the causes of spiritual phenomena found its parallel in discussions of mental illness and psychological phenomena. In both cases the causes were both physical and non-physical. As a result, from the Renaissance to the seventeenth century melancholy was conceived both as a disease and as a natural source of inspiration.²⁶ And while divination, ecstasy, visions, and witchcraft were given a natural basis in melancholic temperament, they were also attributed to the influence of God, angels, or demons.²⁷

²² Aristotle 1984, 953a-955a.

²³ Ficino [1489] 1978, bks. I and II.

²⁴ Park 1988, 468-9.

²⁵ Heyd 1981.

²⁶ Fischer-Homberger 1970; Flashar 1966; Starobinsky 1962; Veith 1965; Kliban-sky, et al., 1964. In the seventeenth century, poetic inspiration was gradually separated from its religious meaning and reduced to natural causes (Spoo 1964).

²⁷ MacDonald [1981] 1985, 155; Heyd 1981, 269-270; Céard 1976. Discussions of melancholy were in fact far more complicated than this brief survey can indicate. For a nice discussion of the relations between humoral theory, mental pathology, the passions, reason, and spirit in Renaissance theory see Babb [1951] 1965, 1-72.

Writers throughout Western Europe produced treatises on melancholy. Renaissance England was particularly preoccupied with the theory of melancholy. English translations were made of books written on the subject by the Spaniard Huarte, the French du Laurens and Charron, and the Dutch Lemnius. In 1586 Timothy Bright composed an English work to console a friend afflicted by melancholy. But it was Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) which did most to bring melancholy to the attention of early seventeenth century England. Burton, who embroidered his account with materials drawn from ancient and foreign sources, became one of the most popular authors of his age.²⁸

'Melancholy', as it entered the vocabulary of the seventeenth century, was a term with many meanings. 'Natural melancholy' referred to a cold, dry humor necessary to the normal functioning of the body and only harmful when present in excess. This humor, when corrupted and blackened by excessive heat, became a noxious humor called 'unnatural melancholy' or 'melancholy adust'. But 'melancholy' also referred to the physical and mental condition of a person in whom black bile was the predominant humor. This was the person of melancholy complexion who was subject to a variety of physical afflictions as well as to disturbances of mood. Such a person, being cold and dry, was especially subject to fear and sorrow without objective cause, but was not considered pathological. However, 'melancholy' could also refer to a class of mental diseases which occurred when natural melancholy exceeded normal boundaries or when unnatural melancholy was present. A person afflicted with the disease of melancholy manifested more acutely those symptoms displayed by a person of melancholy temperament—excessive fear and grief, hallucinations, morbidity, and distaste for society. Unnatural melancholy, when heated, could produce various mental afflictions which the older medical literature did not clearly distinguish from madness.²⁹

Robert Burton distinguished a category of melancholy which he termed 'religious melancholy' or 'enthusiasm', the symptoms of which were various forms of religious fanaticism, rapturous fancies, illusions of divine favor or prophetic powers, or morbid fears of damnation. These symptoms were thought to be caused by

²⁸ MacDonald [1981] 1985, 150.

²⁹ Babb [1951] 1965, 37-8.

unhealthy preoccupation with religion which caused disturbances to the melancholy humor.³⁰ But these discussions always assumed that humoral disturbances joined with malevolent spiritual influences to cause these religious disorders, and that Satan exploited these physical weaknesses. Burton, alarmed by the threat posed to social and ecclesiastical order by the Puritans, prepared the way for More's later anti-enthusiasm by declaring them afflicted by a religious melancholy caused by morbid religious preoccupations encouraged by the fiery sermons of their preachers.³¹ When More wrote to charge opponents with enthusiasm and to explain its causes and cure, he drew on a complex history in which 'enthusiasm' took on different meanings—sometimes religious, sometimes aesthetic, sometimes moral, and sometimes medical. Although More made few new contributions to the theories of melancholy and enthusiasm, his use of these theories against occult philosophers and the Quakers intensified and advanced cultural trends which had impact upon the period of the Restoration.

1.3. METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS FOR THE HISTORIAN OF PHILOSOPHY

The importance of the period of English history immediately leading up to and including the Restoration has long been recognized. It was a time of extraordinary religious, political, and philosophical upheaval and cultural fertility. Scholars have struggled to develop a methodology and a set of categories adequate for understanding the changing cultural attitudes of this period during which inherited vocabularies and patterns of thought were utilized while at the same time being revised. In turning to the philosophical and religious concerns of this epoch we confront the havoc wrought by an explosive religious politics in which both radicals and reactionaries advanced their claims under authority of divine sanction and even personal revelation. Serious philosophical disagreements about the sources of religious knowledge and the spiritual qualities of the world were ever in the company of a struggle to appropriate religious symbols for political and social agendas, and positions advanced by all sides were brought into complicated rela-

³⁰ Babb [1951] 1965, 47-49; MacDonald [1951] 1985, 156.

³¹ MacDonald [1951] 1985, 169, 223-4.

tionships with the new philosophies of nature and their purported ideological “subtexts.” Some read Descartes, for example, as breaking with a scholastic past linked to Roman Catholicism. In this light his philosophy was congenial to England’s religio-political independence. But others, as I will later discuss, claimed that his epistemic methods were dangerously similar to the illuminationism of the radical religious sects.

An historian of philosophy turns to any portion of the distant past with the expectation of certain theoretical difficulties. Among others, there is the problem of selecting the appropriate categories for analysis and explanation.³² In order to achieve historical understanding it is necessary to place the past into a meaningful relationship with the present, and this cannot be done by merely reproducing, under the guise of careful scholarship, the categories of the subjects. Nor can it be achieved by reading the past through the lenses of our own categories, for this would be a refusal to learn from the past because of imperialistic confidence in the superiority of present culture. Here the historian faces a problem analogous to that of the anthropologist who wants to take seriously the magical experiences of her subjects—to “do justice to their authenticity while not wreaking violence” upon her own “scientific world view.”³³ There is no easy solution to this problem. It is inevitable that, in discussing the views of More, Vaughan, or the Quakers, I will at times use categories and terms they would not employ. It is inevitable, because the nature of historical reality is such that it cannot be captured by what Danto calls a “pure” or “full description,” which he defines as “an order-preserving account of everything that happened.” To merely construct a chronicle of events or to reiterate the sequence of expressions of historical actors is not to engage in history. To write history is to make use of organizing concepts which go beyond the “given” and which address current interests.³⁴ History of any kind requires the construction of a narrative in which the past is rendered familiar. To make it familiar I

³² For an interesting exchange on this subject between an historian and an anthropologist see Geertz 1975 and Thomas 1975 for their discussion of the categories employed in Keith Thomas’ *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

³³ Young 1994, 174.

³⁴ Danto [1965] 1985 115, 148-157, 169. For wonderful discussion of the conceptual problems of historical narrative see White 1978, 1-26.

compare, for example, elements of alchemy to science. Such comparisons should be read as analogies rather than identities.

Over the last two decades, the crusade against enthusiasm has been increasingly recognized as an important key to understanding philosophy and theology during the seventeenth century.³⁵ The difficulties for analysis do not rest only on the ambivalence of the term 'enthusiasm', which, as I have already shown, bore a whole complex of meanings when it became a term of abuse wielded against religious radicals, alchemists and natural magicians, and even atheists. These ambiguities provided More with important linguistic resources, but they also pose problems for interpretation.³⁶ Difficulties arise also because when More charged individuals and groups with enthusiasm he most often meant that their claims to spiritual knowledge were counterfeits of the genuine item. For this reason, as Dockrill has pointed out, the concept of enthusiasm, because it rests on some theory of religious knowledge, is inherently speculative and is what Gallie calls essentially contested with no one set of rules to govern its use.³⁷

The anti-enthusiasm of the seventeenth century has been extremely difficult for scholars to characterize. It has been linked to the reform of language, science, and manners.³⁸ It has been seen as a symptom of gradual disenchantment with supernaturalism, as a political reaction against challenges to theological and social orthodoxy,³⁹ as a result of new epistemological standards,⁴⁰ and as the emergence of conflict between Renaissance interest in the magical and the rationalism and empiricism of the new science.⁴¹ But a central problem in every account is that anti-enthusiasts and their targets simply refuse to ally themselves according to commitments which, to our eye, should sort them into well-defined genealogies, neat schools, and clear enmities. Clear battle-lines fail to emerge,

³⁵ For a recent survey of scholarship on enthusiasm see Heyd 1981.

³⁶ On ambiguities as linguistic resources which provide opportunities for the transformation of terms see Burke [1945] 1969, xvii. What I call ambiguities or ambivalences can be understood as different *uses* of a single concept or socially functional incoherence (Gellner 1973, 37-9; see also Skinner 1969, 36-7).

³⁷ Dockrill 1985, 148; Gallie 1962, 122.

³⁸ To cite but a few of many studies which suggest such connections between anti-enthusiasm and moral, religious, and scientific culture in later England see Curtis and Speck 1976; Bristow 1977; Bahlman 1957; and Cohen 1977.

³⁹ Schaffer 1987, 57; idem 1985, 118.

⁴⁰ Thomas 1971, 645.

⁴¹ Shapiro 1983, 82-83.

and any portrait of the typical “enthusiasts” never gets so far as a bare outline. Meric Casaubon, an Aristotelian, considered Descartes, Plato and the Neoplatonists all to be enthusiasts.⁴² More thought that Aristotelianism, as it blurred the distinction between matter and spirit, threatened to seduce unwary thinkers into enthusiasm.⁴³ More charged the Quakers, alchemists, and atheists with enthusiasm, while he was himself accused of being one.⁴⁴

More has been especially difficult to situate because of his obvious affinities with his “enthusiastical” opponents. With Vaughan More shared common Neoplatonic and Hermetic sources of influence. With Vaughan and the Quakers he shared an illuminationist religious epistemology and a desire for the revitalization of religion. With the mechanists he shared an interest in mechanical explanation which derived from his admiration for Descartes. More’s concerns and loyalties are extremely difficult to sort out because he often seems to have more in common with his enemies (like Vaughan) than with his apparent allies (such as Descartes or Boyle). For example, More admired Descartes, but opposed him on very basic metaphysical questions: More was an atomist, believed in animal-souls, conceived spirit or mind as an extended being, and rejected purely mechanical accounts of physical phenomena. More was offended by Vaughan, yet he with Vaughan placed central emphasis upon a vitalistic conception of nature and the existence of a Spirit of Nature, or World-Soul. More was incensed by the Quakers, but was strongly committed to doctrines similar to theirs, such as the importance of a death of self-will as a condition of spiritual regeneration and entry into the deified life. More’s relations with George Keith, who was for a time an important and influential Quaker, illustrate the difficulty. Keith was *converted to Quakerism* by reading More’s *An Explanation of The grand Mystery of Godliness*, a work which More designed, among other things, to reveal the enthusiasm of the Quakers. More later entered into a series of discussions with Keith as a favor to his friend Anne Conway. Along with Francis Mercury van Helmont, he exercised an influence on Keith’s theology that eventually led to his expulsion from the Quakers and his return to Anglicanism.⁴⁵

⁴² Casaubon [1667] 1980, 70-72; idem [1656] 1970, 52-54, 110-119, 125-130.

⁴³ *ET* 48-49; More 1650, 7-8.

⁴⁴ Oldenburg 1961-86, 8:120; Hale 1677, 284-285; Anon. 1690, sig. A 3^r.

⁴⁵ Crocker 1990a, 149; Nicolson 1930, 341 n.

A brief survey of the ways in which More has been characterized quickly indicates the special problems he has posed to our understanding of the dynamics of this period and of the precise nature of More's thought. The violence of More's anti-enthusiastical rhetoric has been explained as a measure of his attraction to doctrines he came to recognize as excessive.⁴⁶ More, who called himself a defender of a Christianity "rational throughout" (*CSPW I*: "Preface General," iv), has been called both a skeptic⁴⁷ and a devotee of the mystical philosophies of Hermes⁴⁸ and Plotinus,⁴⁹ while others have described him as constitutionally incapable of mystical experience⁵⁰ and involved in a crusade against the spread of mystical philosophy.⁵¹ More has been linked to Hermeticism,⁵² has been called a "late Renaissance syncretist,"⁵³ and described as a champion of the Baconians and mechanists in "a climactic struggle for the allegiance of the scientific community between the disciples of Hermes Trismegistus and the advocates of the 'new' philosophy."⁵⁴

In the midst of these varying interpretations of More's thought and his complex relations to his contemporaries it is difficult to know exactly what More was defending, what he was attacking, and what central concerns governed his disagreements. Recently, in the work of Robert Crocker, there has been increased emphasis upon More's mystical interests. In this book I will build on Crocker's interpretation, arguing that More's philosophy, and particularly his anti-enthusiastical and pneumatological writings, can best be understood as an attempt to give an account of the religious meaning of the whole of life. I will analyze his attacks on Vaughan, the Quakers, and strict mechanists as disagreements about the spiritual qualities of the world and the meaningful life. Anyone who reads the writings of these figures knows that these concerns weigh on the minds of nearly all of them, and further effort is required to sys-

⁴⁶ Coudert 1992, 32.

⁴⁷ Popkin 1990, 98-101.

⁴⁸ Hutin 1966, 26.

⁴⁹ Crocker 1986, 34-71; idem 1990a, 138.

⁵⁰ Lichtenstein 1962, 14.

⁵¹ Burnham 1974, 34.

⁵² Hutin 1966, 26.

⁵³ Guinsburg 1980, 50.

⁵⁴ Burnham 1974, 33.

tematically examine More's thought and his polemics with the "enthusiasts" using these themes for analysis.

With the rise of new philosophies came new accounts of humans, animals, nature, and the relation of each of these to God. These accounts had inevitable implications for religion. Innovations in natural philosophy always threaten to disrupt religious understanding as it directs individuals to the sacred and the religiously meaningful life through the medium of the mundane. The religious implications of the new philosophies only gradually worked themselves out, and with this came the need for adjustment, discussion, and evaluation. Part of the difficulty of this period is just the fact that these issues were only in the process of coming to awareness. It was, for example, only dimly understood how the epistemic security of religious experience (broadly construed to include prayer, and wonder, as well as extraordinary "mystical" experience) was connected to some of the new metaphysical systems.

The interpretation of religious experience, especially as individuals laid claim to revelation or divine illumination, was an especially difficult philosophical, religious, and political problem. It had been linked to anarchy, regicide, and civil war and had threatened to shift the basis of authority from the Church and the state to private experiences of individuals which were not easily amenable to correction through discussion. For example, the emphasis of the early Quakers on a total surrender of the will and mind, a total death of self, left the individual with no sanctioned role for reason and created difficulties in distinguishing wayward and sometimes disordered psychological impulses from divine revelation. The Quakers regarded reasoned reflection and criticism as a human effort to seize the reins of control from God and to erect dry intellectual constructions and empty words in place of spiritual vitality.

There are many ways in which a religion can lose its vitality. When emphasis shifts toward dogma and intellectual methods, religion easily loses its immediate bearing on the individual life and its struggles. Doctrines and texts which once seemed to carry their interpretation on their surface can be placed in an ambiguous light as their domain of application is extended or revised, or as new hermeneutical principles are applied. In the seventeenth century the religion which had previously been used for the containment and regulation of popular culture was given revolutionary inter-

pretations by radical sects.⁵⁵ While the civil wars and overthrow of the Monarchy were due to a complex variety of social causes, some saw them as evidence that the Protestant emphasis upon individual guidance by the Holy Spirit had radical political and social implications. For others the social and political upheavals were merely evidence of the wrath of God towards the unjust religious and social institutions of the establishment.

Alchemists, Quakers, Puritans, and Platonists all placed great emphasis upon religious experience. The hallmarks of such experiences were ecstasy and radical transformation as the subject claimed to experience contact with the transcendent and to discover a new life and a new perspective on the self, the world, and society. But the meaning of religious experience was itself an issue. To grant cognitive importance to the experience and preserve its authority the subject had to find some way to interpret the experience, and the religious fomentation of the seventeenth century made every interpretation contestable.

The sheer variety of religious sects which multiplied during this period made unquestioning acceptance of tradition difficult. Christian doctrines, metaphors, symbols, and narratives had become polyvalent through their political uses as well as their appropriation by varying philosophical and religious sects. Alchemists, Quakers, and Platonists, for example, all made use of Christian imagery and appropriated passages of scripture to develop contrasting models of God, creation, and the spiritual life. A particular Christian doctrine, even a particular passage, could then mean a variety of things. Further, it might be so theoretically ramified through its interpretation by a particular sect or so symbolically associated with some political or religious party that it had to be used with caution. In English society of the seventeenth century—when nearly every religious claim by one group was opposed by a claim of another—individuals like Henry More often found it necessary to justify and reappropriate the most basic claims of their religious tradition. The interpretation of religious experience was examined in relation to its social implications. The meaning, interpretation, and

⁵⁵ I recognize that this is a great over-simplification of the complicated relationships between popular culture, religious, and social institutions and religious radicalism. For a more satisfactory analysis of the role of religion in the institutions of seventeenth century English society see Wrightson 1982, 183-221.

respective priority of religious doctrines were reexamined. Pedigrees were sought for shifts in doctrinal meaning in order to develop a sense of continuity with early Christianity. Biblical passages were reinterpreted and some early thinkers (like Origen) were assigned new importance.

All these considerations complicate our understanding of the seventeenth century. In examining More's polemics it will be important to be aware of the complexity of the task which faced him as he attempted to revitalize religion and to distinguish himself from this or that sect. It will also be important to pay attention to the many functions of language he employed. By attending to what was linguistically allowed, emphasized, or forbidden, by attending to the character and uses of each kind of language and its relation to the others, by attempting to understand the "levels" or "facets" of reality with which each mode of language is concerned we can enter more fully into an understanding of Henry More, his total "picture" of the world, his epistemic ideals, and his sources of religious meaning.

In my approach to More's thought, I will resist what Kenneth Burke has called the reduction of agent to "scene."⁵⁶ In other words I will not attempt to understand More by reducing his philosophy to the social currents of his time. This is not because I deny the importance and validity of a socio-historical approach, but because exclusive reliance on such an approach often provides little illumination about what the agents themselves thought they were defending, why they felt it to be important, and with what they thought it was in competition. I want to understand More's perspective or "world-view." I want to understand how he looked at the world in such a way as to find religious meaning in it, and to contrast that with the individuals and parties he called "enthusiastical" in their outlook. I will try to achieve this understanding, on the one hand, by examining the theoretical basis of More's spirituality—the content of More's philosophical thought as it described human character and the natural world and their relation to sacred reality. On the other hand, I will look at the way in which More, through an act of poetic expression, dialectically employed various speech genres⁵⁷ or domains of discourse in order to express and

⁵⁶ Burke 1945, 127-223.

⁵⁷ I borrow this term from Bakhtin 1986.

display spiritual meaning and to evoke in his readers attitudes consonant to that meaning. To some extent then I will be paying attention to what Haydon White calls the “tropics of discourse”⁵⁸ and to what Tambiah calls the participatory functions of language in which “humans on the one hand, and places, objects and natural phenomena on the other, are represented as mutually representing one another ‘iconically,’ and also as transferring energies and attributes ‘indexically’.”⁵⁹ I will argue that More and his “enthusiastical” opponents were offering competing ideals of religious meaning which they expressed by singling out particular kinds of experience as types of religious and moral cognition. I will also show that they differed in their account of the “crisis” experience which provides entry to the spiritual life, grounding this experience in competing theoretical, narrative, and poetical contexts. I will argue that the rival accounts of the “crisis” experience were parts of a larger dispute about the religious meaning of the natural order and the criteria by which to characterize the spiritual life.

⁵⁸ White 1978, 2.

⁵⁹ Here Tambiah employs C. S. Peirce’s treatment of that class of signs which includes symbol, icon, and index (Tambiah 1990, 96-97). Pierce distinguished between icons and indices. Icons refer to their object by virtue of their own characteristics. As Alston points out, this implies that an icon’s referential powers rest on similarities between itself and its object (Alston [1967] 1972, 8:440). An index, in Tambiah’s usage, is a sign which has the power to refer to its object by virtue of the context in which it is used. Tambiah is interested in how these kinds of signs can be used to construct a sense of participation. “Participation,” he says, “can be represented as occurring when persons, groups, animals, places, and natural phenomena are in a relation of contiguity, and translate that relation into one of existential immediacy and contact and shared affinities.” As an example of how indexical signs can be used to create a participative life, Tambiah mentions that the name of a peasant in the Kandyan highlands of Sri Lanka was “a lexical string that successively denoted his village of origin,” his “ancestral house in that village,” and finally his personal name. These names, contained in a single lexical string, fuse “location, territory, residence, caste and family status,” and “ancestry” (Tambiah 1990, 107).

CHAPTER TWO

THEORY, NARRATIVE, AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS

2.1. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SPIRITUAL CRISIS

Information about More's early life is confined primarily to some autobiographical passages of his *Opera Omnia* which was published in 1679.¹ These texts clearly present More's search for spiritual meaning against the backdrop of traditions which had lost their religious vitality. No doubt More described his early years selectively and with polemical aims, but it is significant that More's retrospective understanding of his own career was that it was motivated by insights which he gained through religious experiences. In the narrative he constructed to reveal the religious meaning of his own early life, More began with himself as a child valiantly struggling to reconcile an innate sense of God's goodness and immanence with the doctrinal teachings of the adults in his life. He described himself as possessed even as a child with such a sense of God's goodness that he was moved to oppose the harsh predestinarianism of his parents. He cited this as evidence of the soul's innate knowledge of God, because "so far from being owing to Education" his notions were "directly contrary to it." He also described the punishments he received for his "immature Forwardness in Philosophizing concerning such matters."²

After three years at Aeton, More was sent to Cambridge by his uncle, who had been placed in charge of his education by More's father. More recounted the "mighty and almost immoderate thirst after knowledge" which thoroughly possessed him, especially "for that which was Natural, and above all others, that which was said to dive into the deepest Cause of things, and Aristotle calls the first and highest Philosophy, or Wisdom." As he said, "even at that Time, the knowledge of natural and divine Things, seem'd to me ... the

¹ Richard Ward's biography of More, written in 1710, draws on this source without significant addition.

² Ward 1710, 4-9.

highest Pleasure and Felicity imaginable.”³ But as he diligently studied the works of Aristotle, Cardan, Scaliger, and others he found himself dissatisfied, meeting “here and there with some things wittily and acutely, and sometimes also solidly spoken; yet the most seem’d ... either so false or uncertain, or else so obvious and trivial” that he felt he had largely wasted his time through four years of study. While he never doubted “the Existence of a God, and the Duties of Morality,” yet he found himself becoming increasingly skeptical about the benefits of philosophical inquiry.⁴

The motif here was of childhood innocence lost, of a fall from natural and simple awareness of the nature of God into confusion produced by the artificiality and misdirectedness of a rationalistic approach to religious understanding. More presented this episode as a failure which conveys meaning through the lesson to be learned from it. Retrospectively, More regarded his disillusionment with his education as beneficial because, after taking his degree, it led him to consider a more mystical and experiential approach to religious knowledge.

For it made me seriously at last begin to think with my self; whether knowledge of things was really that Supreme Felicity of Man; or something Greater and more Divine was: Or, supposing it to be so, whether it was to be acquir’d by such an Eagerness and Intentness in the reading of Authors, and the contemplating of Things; or by the Purging of the Mind from all sorts of Vices whatsoever: Especially having begun to read now the Platonic Writers, Marsilius Ficinus, Plotinus himself, Mercurius Trismegistus; and the Mystical Divines; among whom there was frequent mention made of the Purification of the Soul, and the Purgative Course that is previous to the Illuminative; as if the Person that expected to have his Mind Illuminated of God, was to endeavour after the Highest Purity.⁵

It is significant for his later exchange with Vaughan that he included Hermes among these mystical theologies. But he reported that none “so pierced and affected” him as the *Theologia Germanica*, a book which had deeply influenced Luther as well and which, as Crocker points out, is ironically more characteristic of the theology of More’s “enthusiastical” targets than his own.⁶

³ Ibid., 5-10

⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁶ Crocker 1990a, 140. On the history of the *Theologia Germanica* see Jones 1928, xxvi and 4 and Windstosser 1911.

More somewhat qualified his praise of this work, because of its occasional "deep Melancholy; as also no slight Errors in Matters of Philosophy." But what most gripped him was the notion that

we should thoroughly put off, and extinguish our own proper Will; that being thus Dead to our selves, we may live alone unto God, and do all things whatsoever by his Instinct, or plenary Permission

His conviction that this was the way to a spiritual life was so deep that he would not allow it to have been planted by his reading of the mystic, but rather to have been "struck and rouz'd [in his soul] ..., as it were, out of sleep."⁷

More described an ensuing struggle between the "divine principle and the Animal Nature" of his self-will. He came to regard confrontation with this inward duality as so crucial to the Christian life, that

before this Conflict 'tween the Divine Will, and our own proper Will or Self-Love, there can no certain Signs appear to us of this New Birth at all. But this Conflict is the very *Punctum saliens*, or first Motion of the New Life or Birth begun in us.

As a result he came to regard exercises of morality or religion which occur prior to this awakening of the soul as so polluted by "Self-Love" that they are at best "Preparations, or the more refin'd Exercises of a sort of Theological Hobbianisme."⁸ The "death" to the self which terminated the struggle, so allayed More's "inordinate Desire after the knowledge of things" that he then "aspir'd after nothing but this sole Purity and Simplicity of Mind." As a consequence, More said,

there shone in upon me daily a greater Assurance than ever I could have expected, even of those things which before I had the greatest Desire to know: Insomuch that within a few Years, I was got into a most Joyous and Lucid state of Mind; and such plainly as ineffable⁹

According to More's narrative the meaning of his life and vocation centered in the discovery of an experiential approach to religion which minimized the importance of theoretical reasoning in order to emphasize the necessity of purifying and surrendering the will.

⁷ Ward 1710, 12-13.

⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁹ Ibid., 15.

The search for religious meaning through reason alone was depicted as deeply misdirected, as casting a spell over the soul which blinded it until, upon encounter with an alternative account of spiritual knowledge, it was awakened to the importance of self-will as the principle of separation from God and put that account to the test. His rejection of intellectualism was further emphasized by his claim that self-purgation resulted in an inward peace and a mental lucidity which was "ineffable."

More presented his spiritual rebirth as a consequence of turning from obsession with theory to moral concern and direct experience. But the path of self-purgation was itself embedded within a theory which explicitly identified the corruption of the will as the obstacle to religious knowledge and which contained implicit and explicit claims about the nature of creatures, the ontological structure of the universe, human psychology, God, and creation. These presuppositions contributed to the form of More's religious experience and furnished clues or keys for his interpretation of its meaning. They also suggested the forms of discourse by which he displayed its meaning to others in 1640 when, under a sense of divine impulse, he began work on his first philosophical work—a poem in four parts called *Ψυχῶδία Platonica; or, a platonicall song of the soul ...* (1642)—in order to provide a "private Record of the Sensations and Experiences of [his] ... own soul."¹⁰

More, who understood himself to be of "melancholic" disposition and enthusiastical tendencies, was also prone to lucid dreams and ecstatic experiences which occurred most often in response to music and natural beauty by which he was easily "enraptured."¹¹ To More, these experiences, along with his conversion, seemed to have a noetic quality and to be what Franks-Davis calls "intrinsically religious" by virtue of possessing an "other-worldly" factor.¹² It seemed

¹⁰ Ibid., 16. This work was again published in 1647, along with a number of other poems, under the title *Philosophical Poems*. The edition cited is *The Complete Poems of Dr. Henry More (1614-1687) For the First Time Collected and Edited: with Memorial-Introduction, Notes and Illustrations, Glossarial Index, and Portrait, &c.*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Ams Press, Inc., 1967). Henceforth this will be cited as *CP*.

¹¹ Ibid., 94-95.

¹² Franks-Davis' list of such factors includes "the presence or activity of a non-physical holy being or power; apprehension of an 'ultimate reality' beyond the mundane world of physical bodies, physical processes, and narrow centres of consciousness; and the sense of achievement of (or being on the way to) man's *sum-*

obvious to More that his conversion was to be interpreted through the categories of a long established synthesis of Christian doctrine and Plotinian ontology.¹³

2.2. THE PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS: THEIR LINGUISTIC MODES AND THEORETICAL ORDER¹⁴

While More was not the first at Cambridge to make a public profession of Platonism, Dockrill identifies More's allegorical poetry (along with John Sherman's chapel sermons) as the first published signs of a new openness toward pagan antiquity.¹⁵ However, More's *Philosophical Poems* present certain interpretive difficulties for one trained in the history of philosophy. In the first place, the canonical figures of early modern philosophy did not present their philosophy in poetry, and the rhetoric of poetry is a discipline both daunting in itself and made the more complicated when the subject is the poetic presentation of philosophical ideas. Historically speaking, in England it was not unusual for philosophy to be presented in allegory or poetry. The physiological psychology which (in Chapter I) I briefly discussed in relation to theories of melancholy and enthusiasm was presented in allegorical plays (for example, Tomkis' *Lingua* and Nabbes' *Microcosmus*). Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (an important influence on More) provided an anatomy of human nature (II, ix, 21-58) and whole expository poems were devoted to this same subject.¹⁶ But there were unusual features to More's use of allegory.

To begin, consider the mechanics of More's text. Following the address to the reader, the main sections of the *Poems* are:

mum bonum, an ultimate bliss, liberation, salvation, or 'true self' which is not attainable through the things of 'this world'" (Franks-Davis 1989, 30-31).

¹³ The greatest philosophical influence on More's poem is clearly Plotinus. More records that he was the first at Cambridge to own a copy of Plotinus (More 1694, 27), and frequently refers to him throughout the philosophical poems, often paraphrasing large portions of the *Enneads*, or (in his annotations) quoting it directly. For an account of Neoplatonic influences on the origins of Christian mysticism see Louth 1981.

¹⁴ The most complete discussion of More's *Philosophical Poems* can be found in Crocker 1986. Crocker emphasizes the centrality of More's mysticism to his philosophical thought.

¹⁵ Dockrill 1988, 127.

¹⁶ For example, Sir John Davies of Hereford's *Microcosmos* and *Miriam in Modum* and Phineas Fletcher's *The Purple Island* (Babb 1951, 1-2).

- (1) *Psychozoia, Or The first part of the Song of the Soul, Containing a Christiano-Platonick display of Life,*
- (2) *Psychathanasia, Or The second part of the Song of the Soul, Treating of the Immortality of Souls, especially Mans Soul;*
- (3) *Democritus Platonissans, Or an Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds out of Platonick Principles. Annexed to this second part of the Song of the Soul, as an Appendix thereunto;*
- (4) *Antipsychopannychia, or The third Book of the song of the Soul: Containing a Confutation of the sleep of the Soul after death;*
- (5) *The Præexistency of the Soul, Added as an Appendix to this third part of the Song of the Soul;*
- (6) *Antimonopsychia Or The fourth part of the Song of the Soul, Containing a confutation of the Unity of Souls. Whereunto is annexed a Paraphrase upon Apollos answer concerning Plotinus his Soul departed this life.*

Following the main title page of each "Song" we find a second title which characterizes the poems as "arguments": *The Argument of Psychozoia*, *The Argument of Psychathanasia*, etc.

Following all the poems are sections of notes on *Psychozoia*, *Psychathanasia* and *Democritus Platonissans*. These notes contain philosophical expositions of passages of Plato, Plotinus, and the *Corpus Hermeticum*. They also include discussions of philosophical theology, natural philosophy, psychology, theories of cognition and perception, cosmogony, optics, and cosmology, and explanations of the meaning of the poem's allegorical symbols and metaphors. Plato, Plotinus, Hermes Trismegistus, the Church Fathers, and various Renaissance and Medieval thinkers are all cited as authorities. Following the notes is a section entitled *The Interpretation Generall* which is a dictionary of allegorical symbols and philosophical terms.

The first thing to notice, then, about More's text is that it is poetry, that the poetry is allegorical, that the allegory is used to express philosophical, theological, and spiritual claims, that a narrative of a soul's journey is included within a portion of the allegory, and that the allegory is laden with annotations explaining its philosophical, theological, and spiritual meaning. Imagery, evocative language, symbolism, metaphor, and story are combined with analysis, theoretical speculation, and commentary on historical texts. It is poetry together with its highly ramified interpretation.

As Nicolson has argued, More's *Psychozoia* employed the allegorical devices of the Middle Ages: the pilgrimage of the soul, the marriage of abstractions, and the narrative expression of the con-

flict between virtues and vices.¹⁷ The poem showed the strong influence of Alain de Lille and Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. More himself mentioned Spenser, who was in fact one of the most important sources of Neoplatonism in the seventeenth century, in his dedication to his father.¹⁸ But Spenser was only one of many English poets who drew upon Neoplatonic thought, and More departed from traditional allegory in important ways.¹⁹

Traditionally, the allegoric poet is committed to truth in an odd fashion, expending much energy to protect the truth from the vulgar rather than communicate it. This is partly inherent in the definition of allegory as a single trope or continued metaphor, a form of speech which expresses one thing in words and another in meaning. But the obscurity of allegory also rests traditionally upon religious assumptions about the divine source of the poet's inspiration and ineffability of the truth which is communicated. Allegorical poetry imitates divine speech which defies human communication. The allegorical poet's function is to practice anamnesis, to provide figures which will create in the minds of the reader ideas as the poet perceived them in the mind of God, and to evoke a paradisiac vision.²⁰ The allegorical poet assumes that only an elite few will meet the conditions which are necessary to the discernment of the truth contained in the poem. So, for example, Henry Reynolds in his *Mythomystes* (1632) quotes Pico to insist that the ascent to truth requires prior philosophical study culminating in the recognition that there is a higher beauty than the senses can perceive. Sustained elevation from bodily concerns is also required before one can become "ravisht and exalted above the earth and all earthly amusements."²¹ The truth must be protected and disguised in order to make it more valuable and to prevent pearls from being cast before swine. For this reason Murrin has suggested that a poet like Spenser is committed to norms contrary to those of the orator and constructs something like an antirhetoric.²²

¹⁷ Nicolson 1922; Hankins 1971, 21ff.

¹⁸ More, *CP* 4.

¹⁹ On Spenser's Neoplatonism and the sources of the Platonic tradition in the English Renaissance see Jayne 1952.

²⁰ Murrin 1969, 61 and 187.

²¹ Spingarn 1957, 1:151.

²² Murrin 1969, 9 and 11.

Ironically, in many respects the ideals of allegorical poetry are closer to the aims of alchemical discourse (which will be discussed later) than they are to the linguistic ideals of More's *Philosophical Poems*. This is because of the extreme care More took to pin the poems to commentaries which explain and define their meanings. It is true that both Dante and Spencer appended letters of explanation to their works to provide some guidance for interpretation.²³ And Tuve discusses at some length glosses which Christine de Pisan included in her allegory, *Épître d'Othéa*, written at the end of the fourteenth century.²⁴ But it is the rarity of such glosses that made Christine's work so important to Tuve's analysis of allegory, and More's extensive commentaries went far beyond the guidance Dante and Spencer provided for their readers. Allegory is thoroughly metaphorical in nature. It is a figure which must, as it were, remain open at one end and must imply rather than overtly state its meanings or risk losing its formal character.²⁵ For this reason More's philosophical poems do not follow the linguistic ideals of their genre and tend to divest themselves of their metaphorical and allegorical qualities.

Another difficulty in interpreting More's poems is in the connections he drew between theoretical domains we would regard as disparate. For example, More related cosmogony to the life and states of human souls. So he claimed, on the one hand, that the subject of the whole of *Psychozoia* was *Psyche* or the Soul of the Universe along with "her Parentage, Marriage, Clothing or Offspring,"²⁶ and in his preface More stated that the first canto of that poem "was intended for a Platonicall description of Universall life," namely the life which is present all throughout the cosmos (though not present everywhere in the same form).²⁷ But the second canto begins by discussing "the manner of the production" of human souls as "free effluxes" proceeding from the divine "essence" at the

²³ Murrin 1969, 105.

²⁴ Tuve 1966, 33ff.

²⁵ Tuve 1966, 220. Quilligan finds another suggestive shift in allegorical discourse in Fletcher's *The Purple Island* written in 1633. Although in this case she locates the shift not in interpretive machinery appended to the poem but in the strain to introduce moral meaning into a physical world increasingly described according to scientific values (Quilligan 1979, 177-8).

²⁶ CP 136.

²⁷ CP 10.

moment when the cosmos emanates from God.²⁸ After discussing the ontological structure of deity and relations between the persons of the Trinity the canto moves on to the efflux from deity down “to the lowest skirts of the Universe,”²⁹ and ends with a treatment of “the severall states of the Soul in good and evill” which takes the form of an allegory of the soul’s journey to God culminating in the soul’s “rebirth” in a deiform state.³⁰

More’s discussion of soul was cosmogonic (following the temporal order of the formation of the cosmos), ontological (beginning with the deepest level of reality as it is rooted in God and moving downwards to matter and its efformation), anthropogonic (dealing with the specifics of the human descent from God), anthropological (treating the whole nature of humans), psychological (discussing the nature of thought, emotion, reason, and knowledge), and ethical (drawing on moral and aesthetic norms). The poems connected domains which we would keep carefully separated. Psychology was connected to cosmogony and cosmology, theology was not separate from natural philosophy, and epistemology was linked to a theory of the virtues. This suggests that More was operating within the Renaissance conception of humans as microcosmic mirrors of the Macrocosm. Cosmology often preceded psychology in works of the Renaissance, because the microcosmic character of humans meant that human nature was defined in cosmic terms. Allegory was traditionally regarded as essentially human speech because it alone was capable of expressing human nature as conceived in this way. As humans mirror the cosmos, so does allegory reveal cosmic relationships by imitating the way in which the invisible and visible worlds are linked in the cosmos and in human beings. Syllogistic discourse was not considered suitable for expressing such relationships because it pinned symbols to single meanings.³¹ The theoretical order which the poems display was partly rooted in Renaissance views of human nature—a nature which was supposed to be uniquely expressible through allegory. This further emphasizes the peculiarity of More’s annotations which strove to reduce symbols to univocal meanings.

²⁸ *CP* 12.

²⁹ *CP* 136.

³⁰ *CP* 136.

³¹ Murrin 1969, 121.

The theoretical connections of More's poem were motivated not only by a microcosmic view of humans, but by the conviction that the universe is providentially ordered to assist humans in their ascent to God. As said in a later work:

There is nothing that the Natural man is sensible of in this outward World, but the Spirit of God has made use of it to prefigure and set out the condition and nature of Reward and Spiritual things; that hence the Soul may receive hints to raise her self towards him that made her for to inherit Spirituality, and not always lye groveling on the Earth.³²

In More's world, everything was both itself and a signature or sign of a religious meaning. The purpose of the *Philosophical Poems* was to disclose those spiritual meanings—meanings which became manifest to More through his religious experiences.

The religious value of the universe rested for More on the manner in which it reflects the nature of Deity, provides the context in which humans are to discover a specific kind of spiritual fulfillment, and furnishes divinely established clues for the interpretation of human experience. Because for humans religious value arises within the temporal order, More provided a narrative structure by which to emplot the successive events of a life onto a whole which is meaningful in relation to God and the world. The human life was to be interpreted as the journey of a soul upwards or inward to deity. The episodes of life occur on the surface of deeper structures and processes which originate in deity.

2.3. DEITY

More followed Plotinus who pursued what Burke has called the "contextual approach to substance" which posits a ground in which "everything that is, is placed." Since, if the ground of being were merely another being it would, then, again require placement, Neoplatonists often described the divine nature as an absolute which either lacks all properties of being or possesses them more "eminently" in "Oneness." This led to what Burke has called the "paradox of the absolute" in which the universe has its origin in that which is "pure" of what it originates.³³ As Koyré has put it, the prob-

³² More 1692, 129-130.

³³ Burke 1945, 34.

lem was that the Absolute must be 'all' and 'nothing' simultaneously. It must be 'all' in the sense that, as the source of all, it contains within itself a degree of likeness to its products sufficient to account for their rise to existence; but, if like them, then it will not serve well as the ultimate ground. So the Absolute must so transcend what it brings into being that it is a kind of 'nothing' in relation to them.³⁴ Greek Neoplatonism attempted to solve this problem by positing a series of hypostases which successively emanate from the Absolute to constitute the universe by their descent into multiplicity and contingency.³⁵ But the emanation of the first hypostasis remained still "magical" and inexplicable, because of its infinite distance from the pure abstraction of the One.³⁶

More followed a well-established tradition of Christianized Neoplatonism which placed the first two emanations from the Plotinian One within deity as the persons of the Trinity.³⁷ The divine nature was understood as essentially dynamic—eternally engaged in a process of self-manifestation followed by self-contemplation. The self-manifestation of deity originates in the pure unity of the Father which More equated with the Plotinian One (calling him *Ahad* or *Hattove*). The simple and absolute unity of *Ahad* eternally generates *Aeon*, or ἔν πάντα—the Son, who is "the very intellectual all world," "the very Essence or Idea of all things, at once, not suc-

³⁴ Koyré' 1929, 306ff. See, for example, line 13 of book II of the Greek *Hermetica*, "A Discourse of Hermes Trismegistes to Asclepius": "God is He that is neither Mind nor Truth, but is the cause to which Mind and Truth, and all things, and each several thing that is, owe their existence."

³⁵ German mystics (such as Meister Eckhardt, Jacob Boehme, Valentine Weigel, and Sebastian Franck) dealt with the same dilemma by positing a distinction between the Absolute in itself and the absolute as brought into relation to the universe as Creator. The former is variously characterized as *Deitas*, *Divine Nothingness*, or the *Silent Desert of the Divinity*. It does not act, does not create, and has no nature, will or attributes. The creator God which acts and possesses force and power is only God in relation to creatures (Koyré 1971). This, however, leaves unexplained how God as absolute and indeterminate deity is moved to the act of creation.

³⁶ See William James' discussion of this problem as quoted in Burke 1945, 62ff.

³⁷ See Plotinus, *Enneads* I.i.4, V.ix.6-7; Origen, *First Principles* I.i.6 and I.ii.3ff and idem, *Contra Celsum* ii.64. This tradition can be found in Augustine (see Stormon 1985, 95ff.), continues through the Renaissance and is also followed by Ralph Cudworth ([1678] 1964, 546-632) and by Milton (see Hunter 1959). Patrides points out that the equation of the Christian and Platonic Trinities has frequently led to heresy, because of its tendency to subordinate the Son and Holy Spirit to the Father, and points to Origen as a case in point. He also records that Cudworth was vehemently attacked for his own account of the Trinity, especially by John Turner in *A Discourse concerning the Messiah* (1685) (Patrides 1980, 33, n. 1).

cessively or in part,"³⁸ and who is "united ever with the father that brought him forth."³⁹

More—quoting Plotinus' *Enneads* 6.4—equated the Holy Spirit and the Plotinian hypostasis of Soul (*Psyche*). In its internal direction, *Psyche* is the love and devotion which accompanies divine self-cognition: "*Psyche* something removed and without, danceth about the Intellect, busily beholding it, and looking into it, seeth God through it."⁴⁰ More followed the Neoplatonic custom of using light as a metaphor for the emanations from the One, comparing *Ahad*, or the Father, to light itself, the Son (*Aeon*) to the sun, and the Holy Spirit (*Psyche*)

to the Moon, borrowing her light of the Sunne. For *Psyche* hath but an adventitious Intellect, which doth as it were colour her, made Intellectual. But Intellect or *Aeon* hath in himself proper Intellectual life, not being that light onely, but that which is in essence illuminated by *Ahad*: but that which imparts this light, viz. *Ahad*, is light alone, and nothing else beside, exhibiting a power to him to be what he is.⁴¹

Emanation within Deity proceeds from the Father to the Son, whom it generates, and reverts backward in devotional contemplation of its origins.

2.4. COSMOGONIC PROCESSES: CREATION, EMANATION, AND GOD'S BODY

The internal emanations within Deity produce an efflux of energy which brings into being a cosmos whose processes imitate the procession and reversion of the divine nature itself. This efflux or extrinsic emanation results from the activity of the Holy Spirit or *Psyche* in its outward direction, as a result of which those things "that Eternity hath at once altogether" are brought to temporal existence.⁴² Emanation establishes an intimate connection between

³⁸ More defends the coherence of this language through a thought experiment in which the Sun is imagined to move around a circular orbit at an infinite speed. If such were possible, he argues that, "The Sun himself at once stands in each point/ Of this diurnall circle: Thus we see/ That rest and motion cannot be disjoynt,/ When motion's swift even to infinity,/ Here contrarieties do well agree" (*Antipsychapannychia*, II.12).

³⁹ CP 137-8, 145-6.

⁴⁰ CP 141.

⁴¹ CP 137-8.

⁴² CP 136.

entities. It allows two beings to be related in such a way that one, the emanative cause, is the ground of the existence and essence of the other which it brings forth and which then participates in the being of its cause.⁴³ Emanation or participation has features which distinguish it from the four causes of Aristotle.⁴⁴ One of the most fully developed accounts of emanation is found in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* where he describes it as a process in which perfections possessed more eminently by beings on one level of reality are imparted (in a less perfect form) to beings which participate in those perfections on a lower level. As a result of this process, the participated perfection or cause is present in the participant or effect (prop. 140), completes, perfects, and fills the participant (props. 24, 78, and 98), and renders the participant similar to the source of the emanated perfection (props. 15 and 182), while actually constituting an element of the participant (props. 12, 23, and 188). The source of the emanation has productive power because of its superabundant perfection, as a result of which it remains stable and immobile throughout its productive activity and is neither depleted nor reduced in perfection by its causal operations (props. 23, 25, and 27). Consequently the perfections or reality-making properties both flow into the participants and remain in the emanative cause (prop. 30).⁴⁵ Lower beings are then images of their causes (because the perfections of their causes are immanent in

⁴³ For a discussion of Aquinas' (as well as Leibniz's) use of emanation in his account of creation and creatural perfection, see Fouke 1994. While Aquinas is usually understood to oppose emanation, because such an account of creation would both introduce necessitation into God's act and reduce God to the material cause of the world, Aquinas himself explicitly describes creation as a type of emanation (See, for example, *Summa Theologiae*, q.44, a.2). One of More's comments indicates that, in his day, Aquinas was understood to have taught that "Creation is nothing else but an Emanation of the Creature from God, as Aquinas has determined" (CC 138). That to understand creation as a species of emanation need not reduce God to a material cause is clear if it is understood that creation and conservation of creatures is not a type of natural causation and so not reducible to the four causes of Aristotle.

⁴⁴ This in itself is a subject worthy of further investigation. While emanative causation does not appear to be reducible to any of the four causes, it is interesting to note that it provides a framework for the understanding of, for example, how efficient causes can be essentially ordered. One example of this influence can be found in Book II, chapters 1-15 and 18-20 of Scotus' *De Primo Principio* (Scotus 1966, 14-19, 21-23).

⁴⁵ This discussion draws significantly on Sweeney 1966. For other discussions of Proclus' philosophy see Rosan 1949, Grandijs 1960, and Trouillard 1971.

them), while at the same time the transcendence of the causes is preserved. Consequently, while Neoplatonism is sometimes treated as a monistic or pantheistic system, the Divine was both distinct from its effects (by virtue of the manner in which these perfections were possessed), and related constitutively to its effects as the source of their real properties.⁴⁶

More used "*Energie*," along with "Operation," "Efflux," and "Activity," as a synonym for emanation, and stated that "every being hath its *Energie*, which is the image of itself, so that it existing that *Energie* doth also exist, and standing still is projected forward more or lesse."⁴⁷ This results in a hierarchical cosmic structure which More compared to light radiating outward in spheres which are successively dimmer as they are distant from the radiant source. Within this metaphor *Hyle* or matter, because it barely has being, is at the farthest sphere of light. But More regarded even matter, with its ontological inadequacy, as an emanation and manifestation of the divine nature. Its atomic nature participates in the divine unity and its quantitative infinity imitates the intensive (or undivided) infinity of God.⁴⁸

More sometimes described cosmic emanation or the act of creation as if it were the coming into being of God's body in the form of an animate cosmos. As More wrote (glossing Plotinus),

Psyche cannot issue out into any externall vivificative act, unlesse you suppose a body, for thats her place properly and naturally. Wherefore if she will have place for and vitall act, she must produce her self a body. So she keeping steddily her own station ..., like a plentifull

⁴⁶ It should not be thought that these features of Hellenic Neoplatonism are unique to Proclus. Plotinus speaks in similar terms: the One "overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself" (*EN* 5:2.1); each lower emanative cause radiates its influence without losing any of its power or substance (*EN* 3:8.8 & 10); in their unfolding, the One and each succeeding hypostasis are both transcendent to and immanent within all which they constitute beneath themselves (*EN* 4:3.39ff.; 4:8.7; 5:1.7; 6:4.2; 6:4.7; 6:5.9ff.).

⁴⁷ *CP* 161.

⁴⁸ "For I conceive the body of the World to be nothing else but the reall Cuspis of the Cone even infinitely multiplied and reiterated. *Hyle* to be nothing else but potentiality: that to be an actual Centrality, though as low as next to nothing" (*CP* 142). *Hyle* is "The most contract point of the Cuspis ... scarce to be reckoned among realities" (*CP* 164). At other times More describes *hyle* not as an atomic substance, but as a principle of created being, as when he calls it "*Materia prima*, or that dark fluid potentiality of the creatures, the straightnesse, repugnance, and incapacity of the creature: as when its being this, destroyes or debilitates the capacity of being something else, or after some other manner" (*CP* 162).

flame shining out in the extreme margins of the fire begot a fuliginous darknesse; which she seeing straightway actuated with life and form, ... so that darknesse becoming a variously adorned ædifice is not disjoyned from its builder, but dependeth thence as being the genuine and true energie of the soul of the World.⁴⁹

The vital union of God and the cosmos is also apparent from More's discussion of an apparently pantheistic passage of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (*Trismeg. Cap. II. Mens ad Mercur.*): "God being the sole Artificer, is alwayes in his work, being indeed that which he maketh." Of this passage More remarked that the "strange opinion of God being all, and that there is nothing but God" is an "Hyperbolical expression of the close dependence that all things have on God." Yet, he said, it is nevertheless "not mis-beseeming Poetry." For,

... it is not at all strange that all things are the mere energie of God, and do as purely depend on him, as the Sun-beams of the Sunne. So that so farre forth as we may say the body, *lux & lumen* of the Sunne, all put together is the Sunne; so farre at least we may be bold to say that God is all things, and that there is nothing but God. [And so in this poem] ... the whole Universe is exhibited to the mind as one vitall Orb, whose centre is God himself, or Ahad.⁵⁰

The universe manifests deity through its animation: by "the entrance of *Psyche* into the body of the Universe" the "torpent masse" of matter is "inwardly infus'd" by a complete penetration of the Holy Spirit "kindling and exciting the dead mist" which is "the utmost projection of her own life." Through this process that "which before was next to nothing" is established in being, and ordered and shaped into "this sacred animal for perfect sense."⁵¹

God's governance of cosmic processes is analogous to the soul's governance of its body.⁵² Through its descent from God, "all this

⁴⁹ CP 141-142.

⁵⁰ CP 142. But, while More holds to a divine immanence such that God's "Ideal,/ And Central presence is in every Atom-ball" and such that God "More inward is, and farre more intimate/ Then things are with themselves" (*Psychozoia* II.10), yet he does not consider that this emanative account of creation commits him to obliterating the distinction between God and creatures. Since all things flow from God as light from the sun, they have a central unity from their source (*Psychozoia* II.23). However this is not to be understood "as if they were so many souls joyned together and made one soul." Rather, it is to be understood as a common "participation" in the life of God, so that every creature is a kind of image of the others and of the whole cosmos.

⁵¹ CP 138.

⁵² The next 13 pages draw frequently upon Crocker 1986.

visible World" becomes "the garment" or exterior face of *Psyche*.⁵³ The Holy Spirit's governance of the universe is analogous to the human soul's governance of its body in the sense that both are radically distinct from gross matter by virtue of their immateriality. As a result intermediaries are required to bridge the gap between material and immaterial realms. In the case of humans this bridge is supplied by a vehicle of subtle matter or animal spirits. *Psyche* also animates, sustains, and directs the cosmos through progressively grosser vehicles.⁵⁴ The "thinnest" of these vehicles or "films" is *Semele* or imagination, which is closest to the Holy Spirit's own nature.⁵⁵ *Semele* is an act of the divine imagination (whereby the Trinity represents to "their own view the whole Creation of Spiritual Substances") which produces a stream of energy that becomes the "Vital formative Centre of things"—the *Rationes Seminales*, λογοι σπερματικοι or "Seminal Forms" of the world.⁵⁶

Without and emanating from *Semele* is *Arachne*, which More described as a finely spun veil which seats *Haphne*, the "centre" from which the seminal forms descend to generate mirror images of themselves in matter.⁵⁷ More's description of *Haphne* and *Arachne* drew on both Plotinian and Scholastic theories, according to which sensory perception is an emission from the sensory organs which makes contact with objects (through "sympathy" or inherent kinship), and then returns to the common sensorium where these objects are perceived and comprehended. In its cosmic role *Arach-*

⁵³ CP 138, 140.

⁵⁴ *Psyche* emanates *Physis* which in turn generates the universe in a descending hierarchical series: "The number's eight of the Orbs generall,/ From Whence things flow or wherein they converse,/ The first we name Nature Monadically, the second high Life Intellectually, Third Psychically; the fourth Imaginative, Fifth Sensitive, the sixth Spermatically, the seventh be fading forms Quantitative/ The Eight *Hyle* or *Ananke* Perverse, coative." Each of these emanative "Orbs" depends on "the Orb Unitive" which is also called "Nature Monadically" (*Psychathanasia* I.iii.23-24) More's account of how *Psyche*, invisible in its immateriality, is made visible and manifest in the sensory world, borrows its imagery from Medieval discussions of the robe of nature. Nicolson traces this Medieval conception of nature through Alain de Lille's *Complaint of Nature*, which she says was the first to fully develop it, to Claudian's *Rape of Proserpina* (Nicolson 1922, 142-143).

⁵⁵ *Psychozoia* I.40-41, 48.

⁵⁶ CC 17, 76. The concept of *logoi spermatikoi* can be found in both Stoicism, where they were principles arising from the divine fire which provided the forms according to which the divine *pneuma* structured the cosmos (Tarrant 1985, 57) and in Plotinus where they were passive vehicles of Intelligence (EN 3.2.2).

⁵⁷ *Psychozoia* I.49.

nea produces the harmony, 'vital congruity', or 'all-spread community' between creatures which makes sensory perception possible by means of sympathy. *Haphne*, seated upon *Arachnea*'s veil, is also the immanent eye of deity through which *Psyche* participates in the life and experience of the creatures she informs.⁵⁸

Physis, *Psyche*'s outermost veil, represents a "kind of life radiating and resulting from both Intellect and Psyche" through which the spermatik forms (λογοι σπερματικοι) descend into *Hyle* causing bodies to be formed, grow, and decay.⁵⁹ More described the descent of the spermatik forms through the metaphor of dark spots which form on *Psyche*'s inward veil to then "swell" out into physical being, possessing "bulk in quantity" in their "outward forms" which are each a "shrine" of a spirit. These spirits are called "magnetick" because they operate through sympathy rather than mechanically.⁶⁰

The world, as the "body" of God, is made alive through the "vegetable" life imparted by *Physis* and the sensitive or animal life imparted by *Psyche*.⁶¹ Even atomic particles are "nothing but the last projection of life from *Psyche*, which is a liquid fire, or fire and water."⁶² Possessed with a life which is "neither Plasticall, Sensitive,

⁵⁸ *Psychozoia* I.45, I.56; *Psychathanasia* III.i.18-22; *En* I.vi.2-3; Crocker 1986, 64. "*Psyche* being joynted to it all, must needs perceive all forms and motions in it, that are presented to any particular soul. For these representations be made in some particular body, which is but a part of the whole, a knot as it were of *Psyches* outward stole, but the universall body of the World, is one undivided peece, wherefore nor Owl, nor Bat, nor Cat, nor anything else can possibly see, but *Psyche* seeth *ipso facto*, for 'tis part of her body that hath those representations in it ..." (CP 140).

⁵⁹ *Psychozoia* I.41-47; CP 139; *IS* Preface, sects. 11-13. Like Vaughan and the other alchemical writers he will attack later, More compares this formative emanative power to the creative activity flowing from the divine imagination. But it is imagination considered as an entity distinct from the divine nature itself. *Physis*, in More's philosophical poems, is what he will later call the Spirit of Nature. "For *Physis* ... is not the divine Understanding it self, but is as if you should conceive, an Artificers imagination separate from the Artificer, and left to work by itself without animadversion. Hence *Physis* or Nature is sometimes puzzeld and bungells in ill disposed matter, because its power is not absolute and omnipotent" ("Notes upon *Psychozoia*"; CP 139). More cites Plotinus, *Enneads* 3:2 as a source for this characterization of *Physis*. However Plotinus attributes defects in the universe not, as More, to the sluggishness and stupidity of the governing principle, but to the multiplicity inherent to spatio-temporal order (*En* 3:2.2). Further, Plotinus attributes directly to Soul or *Psyche* those activities which More assigns to *Physis* as a principle beneath *Psyche*.

⁶⁰ *Psychozoia* I. 42-44, 46; *Dem. Plat.* 12-16.

⁶¹ CP 139, 164-165.

⁶² CP 139, 156, 160-161. This suggests the interconvertability of spirit and mat-

or Rationall,” the atomic mists “are not merely passive, but meet their information half way.” They are awaked “into this or the other operation, by the powerfull appulse of some superadvenient form” through which they are “changed or disgregated ... and again mingled by virtue of *Physis* or Spermaticall life of the World.”⁶³ In More’s animate universe, even the laws of mechanism were explained through the activities of the living inner principle by which the universe as a whole is joined together as one living organism.⁶⁴

More’s universe, like that of Ficino and many Renaissance philosophers of nature, was pervaded by a universal force of life which tied the lower orders of being to the higher through bonds of sympathy. This universe contained hidden symmetries and correspondencies which were signatures, signs, or symbols of underlying sympathies and antipathies. The duty of humans was to decode these symbols. For Ficino this task was spiritual, inseparably fusing the manipulation of arcana for practical use and awakenment to the divine life within. For More the task was spiritual only as it functioned to elevate the soul to deiformity.⁶⁵

2.5. THE HUMAN SOUL

The animate cosmos is the context within which God’s purposes for humanity are played out as a struggle to bring humans to contemplate and worship God and so achieve the full perfection of their intellectual natures. It is only in the human soul that the created universe can most perfectly imitate the devotion of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit exerts a constant influence on humans to imitate its own reversion and contemplation of the divine nature: “So then the proper effect of this third Hypostasis ... is Love, which completeth the circle, and reduceth us again to the first Principle

ter which is characteristic of Alchemy and which More’s beloved student, Anne Conway, later introduced as a central principle of her metaphysics (Conway [1690] 1982). For a discussion of Conway, see Merchant 1980, 253-274.

⁶³ *CP* 160-161; see also *Psychathanasia* I.4.1, 7 and 10, and *CP* 55-56. More calls the mist of atoms “Mundane Spirit” by which he means “not an Intellectual spirit, but a fine unfixed, attenuate, subtill, ethereal substance, the immediate vehicle of plasticall or sensitive life” (*CP* 163).

⁶⁴ *Psychozoia* I.46; *Psychathanasia* III.1.21-30, III.3.35-37; *CP* 79, 68-69, 139-141.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Renaissance uses of Neoplatonism see Lohr 1988, 572-3, Copenhagen 1988, esp. 288-9.

of all." To allow this influence to have its way is, More said, "to be baptized with the Holy Ghost."⁶⁶

The soul is a mirror image of divinity by virtue of its internal structure and immaterial nature. In *Psychathanasia*, More gave many arguments for the incorporeality of the human soul. In almost every case, his strategy was to argue that even our most ordinary experiences would be impossible to a purely corporeal being. A corporeal soul would have limited powers of perception, being unable to represent to itself anything physically larger than its own organs. It would lack a *sensus communis* or unity of perception, be unable to perform judgments of comparison, lack the power of invention, and have no powers of attention or deliberation. And a body, invested only with a corporeal soul, would lack unity and cohesion and be incapable of self-reflection.⁶⁷

The human soul is then immaterial and contains a "beam" of the "Intellectual Sun" at its "center"—an emanation of the divine intellect which imparts "omniformity." Through its participation in the divine intellect the soul has the power to awaken successively in itself those forms or ideas which are contained eternally within the divine Logos.⁶⁸ As a result, humans participate in "all the life that is in the universall Orb of life" which makes them "a Microcosme, or Compendium of the whole World."⁶⁹

The cosmic processes through which God animates the cosmos are imitated in the human soul's animation of its body: as God is in the world so is the human soul in its body. The soul transcends the physical world through its immateriality and yet is in the body through "an efflux" of energy which is "life not parted from the soul though gone out of the soul, viz into act." Through this efflux the soul vitalizes and controls its body. The soul's energetical nature is such that it constantly emanates life and power, while losing nothing of itself by what it imparts to the body.⁷⁰ The human soul is so

⁶⁶ CP 12; see also CP 145.

⁶⁷ *Psychathanasia* II.ii.14, 22, 27, 28, and III.ii.23. "Nought divisible may/ Close with it self by revolution/ For then or part in this reflection./ Is drove into a part, or part to th'whole" and "If part turn into part, part into whole./ Whole into part, the thing itself doth not convert/ Into itself; the thing itself is all/ Not part of t self: if all to all revert,/ Each part then into each part is insert./ But tell me then how is their quantity/ If every part with part is refert?/ thus swallowed up, they'l have no distancy;/ So you destroy suppos'd divisibility" (*Psychathanasia* III.ii.23-24).

⁶⁸ *Psychozoia* II.22-23; CP 163; see also *En* III.vii.4; V.ix.6-7.

⁶⁹ CP 143.

⁷⁰ CP 161.

far distant from the gross matter of its body that (like *Psyche* in her governance of nature) it requires a vehicle of "subtill, fiery and attenuate spirits" or etherial matter as a medium to act upon gross matter.⁷¹ Actuated by the soul's radiant energy, these material spirits are incapable of perception or thought, but connect the soul to the physical world: "Like spider in her web, so do we sit/ Within this spirit, and if ought do shake/ This subtile loom we feel as it doth hit"⁷²

The soul, suspended between the material and immaterial worlds, is able to direct its attention to either the corporeal stage or to "the lucid voice" of the intellect joined to eternal ideas in the mind of God "which move our souls as sights do here below."⁷³ While it transcends the body by its immaterial nature the soul is entirely present in every point of the body it occupies. Whereas a purely physical entity is confined to a given extension, the soul (like the quantityless point at the center of a circle which can be mapped upon every point of its extended circumference) is able to spread itself over the changing extensions of its own body by "outspread circling propagations/ of its own presence"⁷⁴

The "lowest life" of the soul is the animation it bestows upon the subtle matter or "vital spirits" of the body, forming them into a kind of "shadow" and vehicle of the immaterial soul. Here More drew on a long tradition of explaining interaction between the body and the mind through semi-material spirits. This concept of spirits or *pneuma* had originated in ancient physiology as the vital principle and, joined with humoral theory, came to be used as an explana-

⁷¹ CP 138. *Psyche* acts through "mundane spirits" (CP 138), that "fine unfixed, attenuate, subtill, aethereall substance" which is "the immediate vehicle of plasticall or sensitive life" (CP 163) and which permeates the atmosphere.

⁷² The embodied soul, insofar as it is "bound unto this earthly instrument" is capable of "hearing, feeling, tasting, sight and sent," to which More adds "lower phansie" and "Mundane memory" (*Antipsychopannychia* I.25; *Psychathanasia* II.ii.44). Sensation occurs through the mediation of those fine material spirits which the soul utilizes as its instrument in the body. Through the sympathetic unity imparted to these spirits by *Psyche*, there is "tactuall conjunction as it were of the representative rays of every thing" which results in a regulated instantaneous communication between those objects present to our sensory organs and the spirits or fine matter in the sensorium (CP 139). "So eyes and ears be not mere perforations,/ But a due temper of the Mundane spright/ and ours together" (*Psychathanasia* III.i.18-20).

⁷³ *Psychathanasia* III.ii.51-58. See also *Antipsychopannychia*, canto I, stanzas 25-26, 29, 32, 35, and 38.

⁷⁴ *Psychathanasia* II.ii. 7-12, 33, and 36-37.

tion for interactions between the mind and the body as well as divine activity in the world.⁷⁵

The soul's power over its semi-material vehicle rests in its natural "hylopathy"—an inherent sympathy or kinship with matter.⁷⁶ The soul possesses both plastic powers (which unconsciously govern the vital functions of the body) and imaginative powers (which are a source of conscious control). The human imagination participates in *Semele* which, as explained above, is both the power of deity to represent the creation to itself, and the "Vital formative Centre of things" from which creatures descend from God. The human imagination is bi-directional, with both an inward and outward vector. Through its outward orientation towards the body the imagination is a "sensual energie," raising phantasms (or sensory manifolds) and creating a danger of increasing preoccupation with matter and sensation.⁷⁷ But through its inward vector the imagination opens on ideas in God to enlarge the soul's own "proper World" or "particular Horizon."⁷⁸

Because (through sympathy) like is attracted to like, an imagination preoccupied with sensuality will draw the soul downwards towards the limitedness of materiality; but a soul purged of these preoccupations will ascend upwards in imitation of the Holy Spirit's contemplation of the divine nature after its procession through the Son.⁷⁹ Even a "contemptible candle conquers the beams of the Moon, by the same advantage that the Suns doth the Starrs, viz. propinquitie." So, if we "unite our minds, will, and animadversion" with the sensual energy of the soul, then will the "close nearness" of the latter obscure and dim "those more subtil and exile phantasms." The "life of the body, being vigorous and radiant in the

⁷⁵ Babb [1951] 1965, 8. For a survey of the ancient origins of pneumatology and solutions to interactions between the soul and the body see Rist 1984 and Verbeke 1945. During the seventeenth century the humoral theory, which explained the interaction of body and soul, was also increasingly translated into iatrochemical and iatromechemical accounts in which "animal" or "medical" spirits played a central role (Jackson 1978).

⁷⁶ CP 144, 162; *Psychathanasia* I.ii.27-31.

⁷⁷ CP 102 & 160.

⁷⁸ CP 143. In More's use of the term, "ideas" are sometimes "forms in the Intellectual world, viz. in *Aeon*, or *On*" and other times are "phantasmes or representations in the soul." And Innate ideas are "the soul's nature it self, her uniform essence, able by her Fiat to produce this or that phantasme into act" (CP 162).

⁷⁹ On procession (πρόδος) and reversion (επιστροφή) see EN 5.3.9; ET 16, 17, 25-29; on sympathy see ET 28-31.

soul, hinders us of the sight of more attenuate phantasmes,” yet “being suppress or very much castigate and kept under, our inward apprehension grows clearer and larger” and is enabled to “clearly discern what is true or probable.”⁸⁰ It is then the imagination which holds the power of conducting the human soul upwards into deification or downwards into matter and bestiality. The objects of the imagination determine the direction of the soul through the sympathies they arouse.

2.6. NORMATIVITY

More’s conception of the norms that govern human behavior was inseparable from his metaphysics and ontology. Normativity arose from the metaphor of the organic or animated universe linked familiarly to the authority of its progenitor and from the structure and origin of the human soul in particular.⁸¹ Its participation in, imitation of, and descent from God determine how it ought to be ordered. The human soul, like deity itself, is triune. At its “center” is the spark emanating from the divine intelligence.⁸² From this emanates the rational soul (ψυχὴ or the soul’s “middle essence”)—the “operation” or “energy” of the intellect which, through its irradiation of the body, enlivens it to make it an ἰδωλον ψυχῆς or image of the soul.⁸³ Knowledge of God cannot be achieved through the rational soul, because a multiplicity contrary to the divine nature is inherent in “ratiocination.” Further, because the “operations of the Intellect” are lower radiations of the Intellect itself, they remain ever distant from their object as “intellectual motion about the object intelligible.” We are rather to give “our selves up to the divine

⁸⁰ CP 102.

⁸¹ Kenneth Burke, in noting that the order of authority can be made to overlap the orders of both intellection and love, describes the manner in which it naturally stimulates “the imagination to think of motives in terms of law, tyranny, freedom, duty, inducement, compulsion, petition, obedience, submission and revolt.” He further notes how the meaning of the root word “auctor,” because it includes more than one sense of originator, is apt for describing an order which “draws heavily” upon the orders of intellect and love. For “the concept of the *auctor* includes both senses of originator, either as progenitor, father, ancestor, and the like, or as inventor, creator, maker, and the like, while out of both senses grows the third sense, the sense of the *auctor* as head or leader, from which we derive our usual meaning for ‘authority’” (Burke 1945, 123).

⁸² According to More, the Neoplatonists call this νοῦς and Christians πνεῦμα

⁸³ CP 164, 161.

light, and winking (that is shutting our eyes of reason and understanding) so to place ourselves steddily in that hidden Unity of all things." In this way, the soul's response to God must imitate the unity of the divine nature itself. God, who is "the Good and the One" and "utterly devoid of division and plurality," is immanent as the "deepest Centre" and "first root of all beings" which is

not to be known by reason or Intellect, but by νόου ἄνθει, ... by the flower, or the summity of the Intellect.... [T]hat is, by the unitive power of the Intellect, or by a certain simple and tactual Energie of the soul when it is roused into act.⁸⁴

"Divine faith" is equated with intuitive knowledge and intellectual illumination which imitate the simplicity of divine self-cognition. It "must be simple and uniform, quiet and steddily resting in the haven of goodnesse."⁸⁵

There should be no heteronomy in the soul's response to God, but "now being thus healed, purged and illuminated by this Baptisme of the living Word or Intellect, which is Christ, we are no longer under the Law, nor the terrour therof, but serve willingly." More introduced another organic metaphor to show that in the new birth the soul no longer experiences the law of God as commands imposed on the soul from without: Christ becomes "a vitall Principle" in the deified soul, which "once come sits not so much on the surface of the soul, as dives and divides to the depth of the Spirit, and rooting himself there worketh out from the very bot-tome all corruption and filth."⁸⁶ Self-centeredness must be renounced in order to discover the divine life as a deeper and truer self—an "energie" which, "diffused in mans heart and soul," is our ἐντελέχεια (our end or purpose) as the human soul "is the ἐντελέχεια of the body and governs and guides it."⁸⁷ Human effort, then, ought to be directed to this end, which is "not onely to be without sin, but to become God, that is, impassible, immateriall, quit of all sympathy with the body, drawn up wholly into the intellect, and plainly devoid of all perturbation."⁸⁸ We are to become "one with Him, as it were joyning centre with centre" and so achieve

⁸⁴ CP 136.

⁸⁵ CP 161-162.

⁸⁶ CP 11.

⁸⁷ CP 145.

⁸⁸ CP 147.

a deification in which the soul is “affected as God himself, if he were in the flesh, would be affected.”⁸⁹

2.7. RELIGIOUS MEANING AND THE INTERPRETATION OF EXPERIENCE

Psychozoia contains not only an allegorical presentation of More’s Plotinian ontology, but an allegorical narrative of *Mnemon*’s journey. The story of *Mnemon* (“mindful,” “unforgetting”), the Pilgrim soul, provided More with a device by which to further unfold the meaning of his own religious crisis. More’s spiritual rebirth was inseparable from its narrative context in this sense: only by dividing the events of his life into discrete episodes within a larger whole could he disclose the religious meaning of one particular moment. Only by characterizing portions of his life as episodes of temptation, struggle, or success could he identify a moment as religious crisis or entry to the spiritual life. In the allegory of *Mnemon*’s journey More showed how to construct the narrative dimension of spirituality. Christian experience was depicted as the soul reflecting upon the inner meaning of events leading to the discovery of the inner self and its spiritual needs, and culminating in deification.

In the story of *Mnemon*’s journey, the Christian life is divided into episodes which, as they are parts of a larger whole, reveal the τέλος or divinely appointed end of the human life. The temporal sequences are emplotted as a journey through regions symbolizing particular ontological orientations of the soul. The narrative is analogous to a graphical representation in which points representing orientations of the soul are mapped onto another set of coordinates representing the ontological adequacy of these orientations. Within each part of the terrain through which *Mnemon* journeys he meets characters who tempt him with versions of the spiritual life which preserve the ego’s enthronement. As *Mnemon* understands the inner religious meaning of each episode of his journey, he is able to ascend farther from the darkness of selfishness to deification and enlightenment. *Mnemon*’s journey begins in the land of *Autaesthesia* or “self-sensedness.” This land represents the “self-seeking” soul whose will is divided from God’s. The “lowest” region is *Adamah* or *Beiron* where the selfish soul lives in brutishness and

⁸⁹ CP 144-147.

sensuality as it is governed by appetite and sensation.⁹⁰ *Mnemon* starts his journey here because for More, as for Ficino, the nature of humans places them at the nexus of spiritual and sensible reality. We are both the highest of the animals and the lowest of intellectual beings.⁹¹ The soul requires the animal nature as a vehicle or instrument of its bodily existence, and upon the soul's entrance into the body "the Spiritual or Heavenly Life" lies "for a while closed up at rest in its own Principle." During this time "the Animal or Fleshly Life domineers in darkness & deformity; the mighty tempestuous Passions of the flesh contending and struggling over that Abyss of unsatiable Desire."⁹² Before the soul can entirely escape the dominance of its animal nature it must confront the various disguises of the soul's "more subtil and close embracements of her self in spiritual arrogancy."⁹³ Here More's target was

the vanity of superficial conceited Theologasters, that have but the surface and thin imagination of divinity, but truly devoid of the spirit and inward power of Christ, the living well-spring of knowledge and virtue, and yet do pride themselves in prattling and discoursing of the most hidden and abstruse mysteries of God, and take all occasions to shew forth their goodly skill and wonderful insight into holy truth, when as they have indeed scarce licked the outside of the glasse wherein it lies.⁹⁴

Don Psittaco (the "parrot") is *Mnemon*'s guide through the land of *Beiron*. He thinks that Scripture alone is the basis of religious knowledge and is clearly revealed as a Presbyterian in the stanzas which More added to the 1647 edition of the poem.⁹⁵ In his tour through *Beiron*, *Mnemon* is introduced to the various forms of disguised egocentricity. He encounters those who have been transmogrified into birds through the mechanical emptiness of their formal worship. *Don Corvino* (the "crow") is versed in all "the nice questions of the School-men" and has accepted the authority of the church and its traditions as a substitute for spirituality; and *don Graculo* (the "jackdaw")—whose bearing More compares to that of "a Cathedrall Dean"—holds that reason alone is the source of religious faith.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ CP 143.

⁹¹ For Ficino's views see Lohr 1988, 574; and Kraye 1988, 312.

⁹² CC 29-30.

⁹³ CP 143.

⁹⁴ CP 163.

⁹⁵ *Psychozoia* II.87-88; Crocker 1986, 49.

⁹⁶ *Psychozoia* II. 58, 74-80.

Through his interaction with these characters, *Mnemon* comes to see them as temptations to false spirituality. Reliance on the authority of the church is shown to justify continuance in idolatry among pagan nations and to be based on an heteronomous conception of religion which impedes the introversive path to the life of Christ within.⁹⁷ Reason's inadequacy is revealed not as a defect in reason itself, but as need for its proper functioning. *Mnemon* comes to understand that just as colors cannot be smelled, nor sounds seen, so no faculty can "reach further than its own proper sphear." So whoever would seek knowledge of the divine through reason alone "unto the Sun-shine listens with his ear."⁹⁸ *Mnemon* concludes that God is to be known through a kind of spiritual "sense."

Because in later chapters I will be concerned with More's opposition to "enthusiasm," it is important to note that this episode in which *Mnemon* achieves the spiritual insight which enables him to move to the upper regions of *Autaesthesia* is curiously ambiguous. *Mnemon* is asked to explain how his claim to knowledge of divine things through a spiritual faculty or "sense" differs from the enthusiast's pretension to private revelation. *Mnemon* is compared to *Glaucis* (the "owl"), who as a radical spiritualist typifies the religious "enthusiasm" which would later become More's major concern.⁹⁹ *Mnemon's* only reply is to ask whether light is not "seen by light."¹⁰⁰ In More's allegory, *Mnemon* succeeds in escaping the land of *Beiron*, even though he never succeeds in robustly distinguishing the "enthusiasm" of the religious radicals from his own illuminationism. As *Mnemon* reaches a crossroads, his discussion with the others ends. They continue in the kingdom of the brutish life while he travels forward to a high wall with no apparent passageway.

Finding no door in the wall, *Mnemon* calls to a "lively youth" named *Simon* who represents "obedientiall Nature." The "wise youth" explains to *Mnemon* that the wall does have a door which he has missed through looking too high. *Simon* calls *Mnemon* to follow and, indicating a place nearby which is obscured by a cover of "stinging nettles and such weedery," informs him that the wall is "Self-conceit" and the door is "Humility." *Simon*, who possesses the

⁹⁷ *Psychozoia* II. 85, 91, and 93.

⁹⁸ *Psychozoia* II.97.

⁹⁹ *Psychozoia* II.98 & 107ff.

¹⁰⁰ *Psychozoia* II.98-99.

key to the door, agrees to open it for *Mnemon* upon condition that they travel together.¹⁰¹ *Mnemon* proceeds through the gate of humility into the valley of *Dizoia*, the “upper” region in the land of *Autaesthesia* which represents the “double-livednesse” of an awakened soul’s struggle with itself.¹⁰² The condition of this land’s inhabitants is “mungril, betwixt Man and Beast, Light and Darknesse, God and the Devil, Jacob and Essaw struggle in them.”¹⁰³

In *Mnemon*’s journey through *Dizoia* he overcomes two forms of temptation. The first is *Pantheothen* (“All from God”) which is recognized by the wise as actually *Pandaemoniothen* (“All from Satan”). The temptation here is to enshrine self-will under the guise of severe Puritan spirituality: a “sanctimonious cruelty” manifested as “Oppression of the Poore,” “Fell rigourousnesse,” “Contempt of Government,” “The measuring of all true Righteousnesse By their own modell,” “Rash censure,” “despising of the just That are not of their sect,” “needlesse mistrust,” and “Strutting in Knowledge.”¹⁰⁴ *Mnemon* confronts his second temptation in the province of *Pteroessa*, the “land of winged souls.”¹⁰⁵ There he is approached on a hill by three sisters: *Pythagorissa*, *Platonissa*, and *Stoicissa*.¹⁰⁶ *Mnemon* is so filled with admiration and love for these three maidens, that he briefly thinks that he has at last reached the land of *Theoprepy* until Simon shows him that the three maidens are spotted with “Autopathy,” a concern to avoid harm to the self rather than evil.¹⁰⁷ *Mnemon* finally comes to recognize *Simon* as the higher part of his own soul and, through the union between *Simon* and himself (the conscious

¹⁰¹ CP 32.

¹⁰² *Psychozoia* II.72.

¹⁰³ CP 143.

¹⁰⁴ *Psychozoia* III.14-15.

¹⁰⁵ CP 164.

¹⁰⁶ *Psychozoia* III.60.

¹⁰⁷ CP 159-160. In his “Notes upon *Psychozoia*,” More explains that the “gallant lights” of Stoicism, Platonism and Pythagorianism are “so near Christianisme, if a man will look on them favourably, that one would think they are baptized already not onely with water, but the holy Ghost.” Yet he finds in them an insufficient emphasis upon “humility and self-denyall and acknowledgement of their own unworthinesse of such things as they aimed at, nor mortification, not of the body (for that’s sufficiently insisted upon) but of the more spiritual arrogative life of the soul, that subtile ascribing that to our selves that is Gods” For this reason he takes the life lived according to the principles of these philosophies as “a Type of that life which is very near to perfection, but as yet imperfect, having still a smack of arrogation, and self-seeking” (CP 147).

and “middle part” of the soul which contains will and reason), he achieves deification and enters the land of *Theoprepia*.¹⁰⁸

The poems expressed religious meaning within both the ontological and providential orders. Ontologically, spirituality was displayed as participation in and imitation of eternal relations within deity, as the “middle part” of the soul (which emanates from intellect and contains will and reason) is directed back to the intellect where it rests in God. The reason and will so ordered reorient the “lower part” of the soul which is most closely involved with matter and sensuality. The fruit of this ordering is the regulation of the emotions and passions, elevating them to a more spiritual form which is closer to the mode of existence we will have in the next life when the body of the soul will be an ethereal (and therefore more elevated and responsive) vehicle.

The providential order of meaning was revealed by discovering the narrative structure of life—by providing clues for recognizing events as constituents of episodes which are both opportunities to spirituality and temptations to carnality and disorder. This is only possible by recognizing the context within which these episodes occur: a universe which is providentially ordered in such a way that the individual always has sufficient resources to resist temptation.¹⁰⁹ Temptations are recognized by their origin in materiality through the path of the “lower part” of the soul (which is the bridge from the soul’s immaterial essence to the material world). The soul finds meaning through recognizing that to be captivated and dominated by these passions disrupts it by reversing the soul’s proper orientation.¹¹⁰ The lower passions infect the imagination (and so mesmerize the mind) with corporeal images, and create fleshly appetites (and so enchant the will) which bind the soul to matter and separate the will from God. For if the soul lives “but the life of a Brute, if her vitall operation, her vigorous will, and complacency be that which a Beast likes, I cannot see that she is any more

¹⁰⁸ *Psychozoia* III.67ff., 146-147; Crocker 1986, 50.

¹⁰⁹ *Psychozoia* II.3-4.

¹¹⁰ Despair is a particularly dangerous temptation: for “if a man’s soul be once sunk by evil fate or desert from the sense of this high and heavenly truth, into that cold conceit; that the Originall of things doth lie either in shuffling Chance, or in that stark root of unknowing Nature and brute Necessity; all the subtil cords of Reason, without the timely recovery of that divine touch within the hidden spirit of man, will never be able to pull him back, out of that abhorred pit of Atheisme and Infidelity” (*CP* 166).

then a living Brute, or a dead Man, or a Beast clad in mans cloths.”¹¹¹ The higher passions (like sorrow for sin, awe, ecstatic wonder, and aesthetic appreciation) draw the mind towards contemplation of spiritual things.

Prayer and contemplation have a spiritual meaning which is both intellectual (as they bring us into interior contact with God) and physical. For through the mind’s withdrawal from the “baser affections” of the body, the soul’s material vehicle is purified in such a way as to change the character of experience. This change occurs as the mind, through prayer and contemplation, is enabled to experience more immediately the sensations which arise from the “ethereal matter” of the luminous body or vehicle to which the mind is eternally united.¹¹² Prayer physically assists this elevation of the affections because

the degrees of Happiness and Perfection in the Soul arise, or ascend, according to the degree of Purity and Perfection in that Body or Matter she is united with: So that we are to endeavour a Regress from the Baser Affections of the Earthly Body: to make our Blood and Spirits of a more refined Consistency; and to replentish our Inward Man with so much larger Draughts of Etherial or Coelestial Matter.¹¹³

By conducting our prayer with deep inhalations of “subtill, fiery and attenuate spirits” which are in the air as the material vehicle through which the Holy Spirit providentially controls the physical universe, we purify our bodies and change our affections.¹¹⁴

This link between spirit and matter qualified More’s dualism by emphasizing his commitment to the immanence of the spiritual life. Spirit is linked to and manifests itself in matter. Our spiritual life determines our mode of physical existence and the qualities of our experience, but not in complete independence from material causes and processes.

¹¹¹ CP 144.

¹¹² JS 210.

¹¹³ Ward 1710, 39-40.

¹¹⁴ More assigns important and mysterious functions to the air, calling it “That immense womb from whence all bodies spring,” saying that “all things of Air Consist/ and easily again return to air.” Consequently, he claims that “all bodies be of air compos’d/ Great Natures all-complying Mercury,/ Unto ten thousand shapes and forms dispos’d” (*The Præexistence of the Soul, Added as an Appendix to this third part of the Song of the Soul*, stanzas 23 and 28).

2.6. CONCLUSION

More's poetry is nearly a paradigm example of how, according to Clifford Geertz, religions relate theory and experience:

In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life. This confrontation and mutual confirmation has two fundamental effects. On the one hand, it objectivizes moral and aesthetic preferences by depicting them as the imposed conditions of life implicit in a world with a particular structure, as mere common sense given the unalterable shape of reality. On the other, it supports these received beliefs about the world's body by invoking deeply felt moral and aesthetic sentiments as experiential evidence for their truth.¹¹⁵

More systematically developed his central metaphors to establish an order of higher and lower, a set of inner and outer surfaces, and a map of relations between them with directions on how to move "up" and "down" and "in" and "out." Passions were assigned moral and cognitive status through their relation to psychological, ontological, and narrative contexts.

More's philosophical poems employed a variety of intellectual, rhetorical, and aesthetic methods in order to display and describe religious meanings. In the brief autobiographical passages of his *Opera Omnia* the meaning of More's religious experiences was expressed in the narrative reconstruction of his own life in episodes of a fall from innocent communion with God into willful obsession with spiritually barren rational methods, the discovery of a larger ontological and psychological framework which explained the inadequacy of reason and the importance of moral struggle with the will as a prelude to religious knowledge, and the successful employment of that method in achieving religious transformation. Some of More's highly ramified interpretation of his own religious experiences was no doubt, like most perceptual experience, incorporated into the experience itself as the cognitive set brought to it by the subject. Other aspects of his interpretation were probably retrospectively introduced as he acquired greater familiarity with Neo-

¹¹⁵ Geertz 1973, 89-90.

platonism.¹¹⁶ Regardless, More sought to replicate the narrative pattern of his own experience through the allegory of *Mnemon's* journey. The story of the journey developed both normative models (telling the Christian what pitfalls ought to be avoided, what courses of action ought to be taken, etc.) and heuristic models (through which experience could be emplotted to display its inner meaning). More's philosophical poetry sought to display the spiritual qualities of the world and to confirm their reality by evoking spiritual and aesthetic experiences under a particular theoretical interpretation.

The density of More's interpretation of spiritual meaning and religious experience meant that it could only be displayed by employing a variety of linguistic devices, both evocative and descriptive. Theoretical language was welded to poetry. The display involved motion back and forth between theology, cosmogony, cosmology, ontology, anthropology, anthropogony, psychology, ethics, soteriology, and story. The motion back and forth between theoretical domains and linguistic modes reflected More's commitment to a microcosmic view of human nature which, as I explained earlier, was uniquely suited to expression through allegory and metaphor. The tropes of allegory and metaphor were by nature and tradition open-ended in meaning, and More gave lip-service to this openness by speaking of the infinity and transcendence of the divine nature which cannot be expressed directly by human speech.¹¹⁷ But when More sought to control the interpretation of his poem by binding its metaphors to definitions and commentary he "closed" their meanings in such a way as to reduce their character as metaphors.¹¹⁸

Stanley Fish has advanced the idea that the meaning of a text is not entirely reducible to the information conveyed by an utterance, but is partly contained in an event, namely, "something that is happening between the words and in the reader's mind." He suggests that "meaning as an event" can be made manifest by the intro-

¹¹⁶ For a summary of cognitive psychology and its relation to the interpretation of religious experience, as well as to experience generally, see Franks-Davis 1989, 143-165. On "retrospective" interpretation see *ibid.*, 26-28.

¹¹⁷ *CP* 7.

¹¹⁸ Springarn 1963 contains critical works of the seventeenth century which provide a context for More's attitude towards poetic rhetoric. See especially Alexander 1634, 162 which is contained in Springarn.

duction of “searching” questions about what the utterance does.¹¹⁹ Without necessarily endorsing the adequacy of this as a theory of meaning, it is useful to ask what More’s text does to the reader by means of the extensive interpretative machinery attached to the poems. Many of the metaphors More employed in his poems were part of a common stock shared with Renaissance philosophers, as well as magicians, astrologers, alchemists, and many religious sects of his own day. The inherent open-endedness of these metaphors can be seen in the variety of ways they were employed by these various groups and in the religious disagreements they engendered, which will be the subject of much of this book. The control More established over the reader’s interpretation of these metaphors reflects the control More wished to exercise over the interpretation of the spiritually meaningful life. As the reader of the text is denied latitude in the interpretation of tropes which, without commentary, would be open-ended, so the spiritualist is denied latitude in how to construct the religious meaning of human experience. The narrowness and particularity of More’s conception of spiritual meaning explains the testiness of his exchange with the alchemist, Thomas Vaughan, who employed many of More’s favorite metaphors to express a competing conception of religious meaning.

¹¹⁹ Fish 1972, 389 and 393.

CHAPTER THREE

THOMAS VAUGHAN AND THE ALCHEMICAL WORLD

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In his *Philosophical Poems* More cited Hermes Trismegistus and Ficino, as well as Plotinus. The poems are filled with concepts, imagery, and metaphors which passed from the Renaissance revival of Neoplatonism into traditions of natural magic and alchemy inherited by the seventeenth century. Like More, alchemical and magical writers complained about intellectualist approaches to religion and voiced the need for experience. Based on these poems alone, More might be naturally classified with magical and alchemical traditions, among such occult philosophers as Robert Fludd, John Dee, Sendivogius, and d'Espagne. While we might not expect More to have specifically alchemical interests, many passages of the *Philosophical Poems* might lead us to expect that he would be tolerant of alchemical theology.

In the poems he wrote that God “is as infinitely various as simple” so that is it “more safe to admit all possible perfections in God, then rashly to deny what appears not to us in our particular posture.”¹ He emphasized the value of theological speculation as a cure for the theological complacency of the dogmatists and as an aid to the higher functions of the imagination. For example, More himself engaged in bold and exhilarated speculation on the infinity of worlds in *Democritus Platonissans*, an appendix to *The Song of the Soul*.² But he made the interesting confession that the source of his

¹ CP 7. This parallels his latitudinarianism with regard to forms of worship, of which he says that “left to doubt we cannot well enjoyn/ Nor this nor that, nor Faith-forms freely coyn/ And make the trembling conscience swear thereto,/ for we our selves do but ghesse and divine/ What we force other men to swear is true” (*Psychozoia*, canto II, stanza 103; CP 28). Confronted with the divine infinity, More recommends philosophical and theological humility, for there is “roome enough in the Deity for every man to speak diversely ..., in the representation thereof, and yet no man nor all men together to set out accurately and adequately the nature of God” (CP 141).

² The full title is, *Democritus Platonissans, or An Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds out of Platonick Principles. Annexed To this second part of the Song of the Soul, as an Appendix thereunto.*

speculations was merely what his "sportfull phancie, with pleasure hath suggested." He described his "old designe" in this to be that of "furnishing mens minds with a variety of apprehensions concerning the most weighty points of philosophie, that they may not seem rashly to have settled in the truth, though it be truth: a thing as ill beseeming philosophers, as hastie prejudicative sentence [is unseemly for] Politicall Judges."³ He insisted that, because "the mind of man" is "so unable to conceive any thing of the naked being of God," even "more grosse and figurate representations of Him" may be "sutable to & expressive of His unquestioned Attributes," and so "not onely passable but convenient for created understandings, to lead them on in the contemplation of God in easie Love and Triumph."⁴ But More was so far from sympathy with and toleration for alchemy that his next foray into print was a polemical attack on the alchemist Thomas Vaughan, whom More denounced for enthusiasm.

'Enthusiasm'—from the Greek ἐνθουσιασμός—originally meant to be inspired, filled, or possessed by a god, to be rapt or to be in ecstasy. The term was sometimes used as a synonym for divine revelation. According to this meaning, More would seem to have been an enthusiast. But enthusiasm came to have a pejorative sense by the middle of the seventeenth century, partly as a reaction to what were perceived as spiritual excesses of the religious radicals during the civil war and Interregnum.⁵ In charging Vaughan with enthusiasm, More was denouncing him for religious errors which had led to religious and political disorder.

The alchemy of the seventeenth century had a complicated history of involvement with scientific and educational reform, political and religious radicalism, and even with royalism.⁶ The 1650's marked the beginning of a flood of translations of continental

³ CP 90.

⁴ CP 141.

⁵ For example, Casaubon [1656] 1970; Heyd 1981, 1993; Hutton 1990a; Knox 1950; Lee 1931; Rosen 1968; Sedgwick 1653.

⁶ For a general account of the history of alchemy, especially with regard to its theory of matter, see Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield [1962] 1977, 109ff. On Rosicrucian alchemy see Yates 1972. On alchemy and medical reform see Webster 1976, 1979a, and 1979b; and Kocher 1947. On alchemy in the Renaissance see Wightman 1962; Pagel 1958 and 1961; Koyré 1929 and 1971. On alchemy's role in the scientific revolution see Westman and McGuire 1977; West 1962; Webster 1982; Hubicki 1962; Guerlac 1953 and 1954; Dobbs 1975; Principe 1992. On royalist uses of alchemy, see Mendelsohn 1992.

works on magic and alchemy. England saw the publication of more books on alchemy between 1650 (when the *Corpus Hermeticum* was translated into English)⁷ and 1680 than during any other period of its history.⁸ A major figure for the alchemists of this period was Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus of Hohenheim, 1491-1541), whose influence on English science is apparent from the increasing number of translations of his works which followed the publication, in 1652, of Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*.⁹ Paracelsianism, which presented an important challenge to the Galenic medicine dominating the universities, found receptive ground among some social and religious reformers who were increasingly suspicious of Classical authorities. Paracelsian concepts were further advanced by the increasing popularity of such authors as Valentine Weigel, Robert Fludd, Comenius, and Jacob Boehme, who wove together Paracelsian natural philosophy, mysticism, and cosmogonic treatments of biblical texts.¹⁰

An important variant of alchemical thought is found in Rosicrucianism which, from obscure origins, was introduced into England during this time.¹¹ The Rosicrucian Manifestos emphasized the failure of religious reform and sought to achieve ecclesiastical reunion among the divided sects of Christendom. Because the

⁷ The first English translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was made by John Everard: *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (London, 1650). Seven years later there appeared a posthumous publication of Everard's translation of *Asclepius: Hermes Trismegistus: His Second Book, called Asclepius* (London, 1657). Everard also translated that book which exercised such a tremendous influence on More, *Theologia Germanica, or Mystical Divinities* (London: Giles Randall, 1648). Everard (1575-1650?) was an Anglican minister and graduate of Clare College at Cambridge, who was accused of Familism. (See Nicolson 1930, 42; Schuler 1980, 308ff.; Hill [1972] 1991, 185, 261, 264, and 327).

⁸ As determined by J. Ferguson in *Journal of the Alchemical Society*, 1914. (Cited by Thomas 1971, 227.)

⁹ Charles Webster notes that Paracelsian ideas were late in finding introduction to English intellectual circles, finding only a few adherents before 1640, and these (with the notable exceptions of Theodore de Mayerne and Thomas Mouffet) from the lower ranks of the medical profession. In contrast to Germany and France, England produced no significant expositions or handbooks of Paracelsian medicine and chemistry and no translations of continental Paracelsian authors before 1650 (Webster 1976, 273). For a further discussion of the transmission of Paracelsian influences to England see Debus 1966; Kocher 1947. For a discussion of Paracelsus' influence on Bacon see Rees 1975 and 1977. For a general discussion of alchemy and chemistry after 1650 see Thorndike 1958, 8:352ff.

¹⁰ Webster 1976, 274-276.

¹¹ For the history and influence of Rosicrucianism see Yates 1972. For John Dee's influence on Rosicrucianism see Yates 1969.

Protestant Reformation had only resulted in further divisions and the Catholic Reformation had gone astray, the Rosicrucians proclaimed the need for a general religious reformation grounded in the Hermetic, alchemical, and cabalistic traditions, which discovered God in nature and found in magic a divinely appointed science that could be applied to relief of humanity's suffering.¹² Scholasticism was rejected because it was "unfit, and unsuitable" that "people professing the Christian Religion" should embrace the pagan philosophy of Aristotle when writers within the Hermetic tradition, such as Robert Fludd, presented a genuinely Christian philosophy.¹³ The Rosicrucians sought to establish a mystical philosophy by which nature could be unlocked to reveal the divine meanings which would unite Christendom.

3.2. THOMAS VAUGHAN ON THE DEITY AND COSMOGENESIS

Thomas Vaughan (1621/22-1655/56) was important in introducing the Rosicrucian variant of Hermetic and alchemical thought into England. He earned his B.A. in 1638 at Jesus College in Oxford. Vaughan, like More, described his encounter with Platonism as an important transitional event in his life.¹⁴ He was ordained in 1640, but after being ejected from his living in 1649, resided in London and Oxford under the patronage of Sir Robert Moray. Sir Robert Moray, who at one time was Secretary of State for Scotland, was a natural philosopher who later became the first president of the Royal Society.¹⁵ Both Moray and Vaughan had close connections with Rosicrucianism. Moray was reportedly elected into the society on 20 May 1641,¹⁶ and Vaughan, while claiming acquaintance with no member of the Fraternity and that he was "neither papist nor sectary but a true resolute protestant in the best sense of the Church of England," announced himself "of the same faith" with the brothers of the Rosy Cross.¹⁷ Vaughan was instrumental in

¹² See Yates 1972, 139.

¹³ Webster [1653] 1970, 105.

¹⁴ Vaughan 1984, 521.

¹⁵ Further biographical information on Vaughan can be found in Wood 1691-1692 ; Vaughan 1919, "Introduction"; Vaughan 1984, "Introduction."

¹⁶ See Martin 1960; Guinsburg 1980, 37.

¹⁷ Vaughan 1984, 92 and 505. Charles Webster further confirms Vaughan's membership in the Church of England (Webster 1967b).

introducing Rosicrucian writings into England, editing and publishing the Rosicrucian Manifestos under his pseudonym (Eugenius Philalethes), and he addressed his *Anthroposophia Theomagica* (1650) to the brothers of the Rosy Cross.¹⁸ Vaughan freely wove together mysticism, magic, Hermeticism, and alchemy as he drew on such figures as Hermes, Plato, Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus, Lull, Fludd and many others. Three writers he particularly recommended were Sendivogius, d'Espagne, and Agrippa.¹⁹ To understand Vaughan (and More's reaction to him) it is necessary to reconstruct some picture of the alchemical

¹⁸ Vaughan 1984, 49.

¹⁹ Ibid., 136-137. Michael Sendivogius [Michał Sędziwój] was a Polish alchemist who lived from 1566 to 1636. His earliest alchemical treatise, *Tractatus Duodecim de Lapide Philosophorum*, was published twice in 1604, at Prague and at Frankfurt am Main, under the name "Devi Leschi Genus Amo," an anagram which concealed the author's name and which means "I love the tribe of the Divine Leszek." This same treatise was published two years later in both a German and Latin translation. In 1608 it was published in Paris under a changed title, *Novum Lumen Chymicum*, by Jean Beguin and later as *Cosmopolite, ou nouvelle lumière de la physique naturelle*.... The influence and importance of this work is indicated by the fact that during the seventeenth century, under differing titles, it went through thirty editions in Latin, German, French and English (See Hubicki 1962, 829-833; Thorndike 1958, 7:158-159). For a discussion of Sendivogius' influence, especially on John Mayow, see Guerlac 1953, 332-349; idem 1954, 243-255; Partington 1956, 217-230, 405-417. For a discussion of the Paracelsian sources of Sendivogius' thought see Debus 1966, 115; idem 1964a, 835-839; idem 1964b, 43-61; Pagel 1958, 118, n. 324.

Jean d'Espagnet's *Enchyridion Physicae Restitutae* (*Handbook of Restored Physics*) was first published in 1623, with second and third editions appearing in 1638. Other editions appeared in 1642, 1647, 1653, 1673 and 1702. A French translation was printed in 1651. The work contains 244 brief chapters which develop a strongly Neoplatonic physics to explain God, creation and the harmony of the universe. While some have argued that d'Espagne was a Neoplatonic physicist rather than an alchemist, Schuler's study of a secret alchemical brotherhood, "The Society of the Sun in Aries," has found that once initiated, the Sons were enjoined to make a serious study of the Bible, and "the Book called Enchiridion Restitutum." D'Espagne's *Enchyridion Physicae Restitutae* was then the chief non-scriptural handbook of this society, illustrating the Neoplatonic magic upon which much of spiritual alchemy was based (Schuler 1980, 299ff.). An overview of d'Espagnet's physics can be found in Thorndike 7:386ff.

In 1510 Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486-1535), whom many consider to have been the teacher of Paracelsus, published *De occulta philosophia*, which was translated into English as *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London, 1651) (see Paracelsus 1969, lxix). A description of the place of Agrippa's magic within the Renaissance tradition can be found in Yates 1964, 130ff.; Thorndike 1958, 5:127ff.; and in Beck 1969, 139-143. This work, like other writings on magic published after Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, presented a theoretical framework for astrology, alchemy, medicine, and magic. On Vaughan's interpretation of Agrippa see Newman 1982.

world. The reconstruction which follows is inevitably oversimplified and homogeneous, ignoring, as it must, significant differences between alchemical writers (on such questions as whether Prime Matter is created or uncreated, how many elements there are, whether they are themselves primary or constituted of yet more primary substances or forces, etc.) in order to present the broader dynamics of the confrontation between More and Vaughan. It is clear that More took issue most deeply not with this or that specific alchemical position of Vaughan, but with Vaughan as a type of religious thinker and natural philosopher.

It is important to recognize that magic and alchemy represent, among other things, complex religious phenomena. Magic and alchemy were analogous both to operational sciences of Neoplatonic metaphysics and to ritualistic practices of a Christianized Neoplatonism, offering salvation, control of nature, and knowledge of God. Fusions of Christianity and Platonism had a long history in which the syntheses of the seventeenth century had their immediate ancestry in the Renaissance. The peculiarities of Renaissance Neoplatonism had interesting origins in confusions about the ancestry of influential texts. The *Corpus Hermeticum* was thought to be the expression of ancient Wisdom, transmitted by Moses through the Egyptians to Plato and the Greeks. When Ficino, in the fifteenth Century, translated all of Plotinus and Proclus' *Platonic Theology* and the *Elements of Theology*, these works were published with a translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* which combined religious and magical ideas.²⁰ The publication of these works in one corpus was significant because it authorized a genealogical link between late Greek Neoplatonism, magic, and Christian theology as heirs of a single source of ancient wisdom called the "Prisca Theologia."²¹ In fact, the *Corpus Hermeticum* was far less ancient than Ficino thought, and was the product of Pagan religious thought during the second and third centuries A.D. When, in 1614, Isaac Casaubon corrected the date of the *Corpus*, this dating was not universally received. And even those who accepted the dating continued the tradition of synthesizing Neoplatonism, Pagan magic, and

²⁰ For a discussion of the events leading up to this momentous development see Feibleman 1971.

²¹ This tradition is described in detail in Walker 1972.

Christian Theology.²² Consequently, it is not surprising that a figure like Vaughan combined magical, Neoplatonic, and Christian thought, because he, like others of his day, found authorization in a long tradition which embraced the marriage of theological speculation, chemical operations, and natural philosophy and found in this fusion a rich source of religious associations.

A religious concern was at the heart of the interest in cosmogonic processes which Vaughan shared with many other alchemists of the seventeenth century. For Vaughan, as for More, the world was filled with signatures or signs of a permeating spiritual reality.²³ For both men the resemblances of things were grounded in the origin of all in a hierarchical descent from God. Alchemy and natural magic were informed by Neoplatonic Cosmogony, according to which

the Spirit cometh from God, and from the Spirit cometh the soul, and the soul doth animate and quicken all other things in their order, that Plants and bruit beasts do agree in vegetation or growing, bruit beasts with Man in sense, and Man with the Divine creatures in understanding, so that the superior power cometh down even from the very first cause to these inferiours, deriving her force into them, like as it were a cord platted together, and stretched along from heaven to earth, in such sort as if either end of this cord be touched, it will wag the whole; therefore we may rightly call this knitting together of things, a chain, or link and rings....²⁴

This immediately introduces the problem of the radical origination of all things from a common transcendent source, which in the previous chapter was recognized as a particular preoccupation of Greek Neoplatonism and German mysticism.

In alchemical thought cosmogenesis begins as an urge within deity itself, which (according to Hermetic understanding) is in ten-

²² Treatments of Renaissance Neoplatonism and Hermeticism can be found in Yates 1964 and Walker 1975.

²³ As Foucault has said in his remarkable discussion of signatures, within such an understanding of the world, "To search for meaning is to bring to light a resemblance. To search for the law governing signs is to discover the things that are alike. The grammar of beings is an exegesis of these things. And what the language they speak has to tell us is quite simply what the syntax is that binds them together. The nature of things, their coexistence, the way in which they are linked together and communicate is nothing other than their resemblance. And that resemblance is visible only in the network of signs that crosses the world from one end to the other" (Foucault [1970] 1973, 29).

²⁴ Porta [1658] 1957, 8.

sion with its own absoluteness and leads first to separation within deity itself and then to external emanation or the actual extrinsic act of creation: the unfolding of the divine perfection within the conditioned and imperfect domain of finite being.²⁵ Referring to Jacob Boehme's *Three Principles of the Divine Essence*, Vaughan described the nothingness out of which God created all things as God's own "transcendent Essence" of which "wee can affirme nothing" and "whose Theology is Negative."²⁶ Merging the language of emanation with biological and chemical metaphors,²⁷ God was por-

²⁵ As Pagel points out, these notions are also found in Gnostic and Cabalistic thought. He connects the Gnostic idea of a negative divine principle with the Cabalistic notion of the Infinite (En-Soph), which is considered an absolute negation or *Nothing* (*Ayin*) inaccessible to human understanding. In Cabalistic thought the Nothingness within divinity (also called the *I shall be* (*Ehje*) is an impulse towards creation which releases the hidden inaccessibility of the Divine. This absolute *Nothing* is that from which creation *ex nihilo* unfolds, and is sometimes called aboriginal *Will*. Pagel summarizes the connection between Paracelsian *Prime Matter* and Hermetic, Gnostic, and Cabalistic speculation as follows: "Matter as a part of divinity, forming a hypostasis that subsists *with* God, acts as the Wisdom and *Word* that creates from *Nothing* and becomes ordinary matter ... which calls for liberation and redemption by eventually returning to the supreme Being" (Pagel 1961, 126ff.; see also Debus 1960, 133-134).

²⁶ Fludd writes that "There is noe beginning but wisdom. the which being contracted in the abyss of darknes (according to the saying of Mercurius Trismegistes. *Monas generat monadem, et in se ipsum reflexit ardorem suum*) remayned as it wer vacant or without action, or, as others say, havinge a respect unto nothinge, and therefore is called of the Hebrews ... *Ein*, that is *Nihil*. or *non ens*, and *non finis*, for so much as we are so sterill in our apprehension and poore and impotent in our capacityes and observations of divine obiects, that we iudg of thos things which appeare not, as if they wer not at all: But when they shew forth them selves and appeare to be some thinge and that in very deed they have a subsistence, then the Cabalists doe say that dark or obscure Aleph is converted into bright and shining Aleph, which Aleph eyther way taken is ment and understood for God ..." (Fludd 1949, 115).

²⁷ The chemical metaphor has roots in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which Vaughan at times cites explicitly in his accounts of creation (eg., Vaughan 1984, 469). Consider, for example, the following description of creation as a chemical separation in book III of the Greek *Corpus*, entitled "A Holy Discourse of Hermes Trismegistes": "There was darkness in deep, and water without form; and there was a subtle breath [*πνεῦμα*], intelligent, which permeated the things in chaos with divine power. Then, when all was yet undistinguished and unwrought, there was shed forth holy light; and the elements came into being. All things were divided one from another, and the lighter things were parted off on high, the fire being suspended aloft, so that it rode upon the air; and the heavier things sank down ..." (Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:147). Again consider the following passage taken from *Poimandres*: "When he [Poimandres, the Mind of the Sovereignty] had thus spoken, forthwith all things changed in aspect before me, and were opened out in a moment. And I beheld a boundless view; all was changed into light, a mild and joyous light; and I marvelled when I saw it. And in a little while, there had come to be in one

trayed as “the well-spring from whence all things flow” and creation as “a certain stupendious Metaphysicall Birth, or Deliverie” which first issued “a certain kind of Cloud or Darknesse, which was condensed into Water.” And this “fine Virgin-water, or Chaos, was the second Nature from God himself, and if I may say so, the Child of the Blessed Trinitie.”²⁸ It was “that One Thing in which all Things were contained.”²⁹

From the divine nature issued two universal principles which were responsible for the evolution of the world from God: one active and the other passive or material. These principles arose through God’s self-contemplative activity. The “Universal Agent” arose from the divine intellect because when God “was dispos’d to Create” there was “no other Patterne or Exemplar whereby to frame and mould his Creatures, but himself,” and so “as he conceived so hee created, that is to say, hee created an outward forme answerable to the inward Conception, or figure of his Mind.”³⁰ First Matter or Earth, the passive principle, came into being through an activity “of the Divine Imagination, acting beyond itself in contemplation of that which was to come and producing this passive darkness for a subject to work upon in the circumference.”³¹ In this First Matter “the Divine Wisdome is collected in a Generall Chaod-icall Center.”³²

part a downward-tending darkness, terrible and grim.... [A]nd thereafter I saw the darkness changing into a watery substance, which was unspeakably tossed about, and gave forth smoke as from fire.... But from the Light there came forth a holy Word, which took its stand upon the watery substance, and me thought this Word was the voice of the light” (ibid., 1:12). D’Espagne writes that “The division of the higher waters from the lower, expressed in *Genesis*, seems to be done by the severing the subtile from the thick, and as it were a thin spirit from that smoaky body [the first matter]; there was needful therefore of that lightsom spirit proceeding from the Word of God” (d’Espagne 1651, 12). Paracelsus’ description of creation as chemical separation provided the basis for some of Erastus’ accusations of heterodoxy. For a discussion of this see Pagel 1961, 126ff.; Debus 1960, 71-97.

²⁸ Paracelsus likewise interprets *Genesis* as identifying water as the first matrix (eg., Paracelsus 1969, 13).

²⁹ Vaughan 1650c, 110-111.

³⁰ Vaughan 1650c, 81.

³¹ Compare this passage to this passage, quoted in chapter 2, from More’s poetry: “Psyche cannot issue out into any externall vivificative act, unlesse you suppose a body, for thats her place properly and naturally. wherefore if she will have place for an vitall act, she must produce her self a body. So she keeping steddily here own station ..., like a plentiful flame shining out in the extreme margins of fire, begot a fuliginous darknesse; which she seeing streightway actuated with light and form ...” (*CP* 141-2).

³² Vaughan 1984, 60, 313. This notion of a Chaos is reminiscent of the Neo-

Creation occurred as First Matter³³ was animated and chemically separated by operations of the Holy Spirit and Christ.³⁴ Citing Poimandre's discussion with Trismegistes,³⁵ Vaughan described a

platonian hypostasis of Noûs which contains a multiplicity in unity and which More identified with Christ. Paracelsus uses the notion of the Λογος found in the Gospel of John as the model for Prime Matter. Paracelsus calls the Prime Matter of the World the divine Fiat which, as the Word eternally with God, is the *ultima materia* which is materially manifested as Prime Matter in the initial moment of creation. From the Prime Matter, or *Mysterium Magnum*, all other particular substances are generated. Prime matter is the uncreated source of all things containing "semina" or vital forces which form the kernel of each individual object. It is the source of form and matter. An excellent discussion of these complex issues in Paracelsus can be found in Pagel 1961, 118-135. For a further discussion of Paracelsus' account see Debus 1966, 25ff. Paracelsian notions of Prime Matter have been traced to Salomo ibn Gebirol ("Avicebron") and Giordano Bruno (Pagel 1958, 229-232, 337).

³³ Vaughan calls it "the visible, tangible Quintessence, or the first created unity, out of which the Physicall Tetractys did spring," an "Earth of wax, that is capable of all Formes and Impressions," a "Divine animated Masse, ... a world without Forme, neither meer power, nor perfect Action" (Vaughan 1984, 328-329). Hall notes that according to Paracelsus creation gives rise to or starts from some kind of initially undifferentiated substance. Hall further notes that such a notion is repeatedly found from ancient to modern times in western accounts of both biological generation and cosmology (Hall 1969, 1:175). Vaughan's description of first matter is typical of alchemists in that it is sometimes chemical and sometimes vitalistic. The first matter is sometimes called a "chaos" (Vaughan 1650, 110-111) and sometimes called "the Sperm of two Universall Natures Heaven and Earth." The motivation behind both descriptions seems to be that the first matter is thought to contain all things inchoately. So it is described as "a miraculous substance, and of which you may affirme contraires without inconvenience" (Vaughan 1984, 462). In some sense this seems to be an effort to provide a chemical description of Plotinus' first hypostasis, which contains a multiplicity in unity, thus being fit to generate the multiplicity of the universe. For example, d'Espaigne describes this first matter as the source of contrary principles sufficient to produce the variety of creatures, but as resting in harmony. The harmony is sometimes explained metaphysically and sometimes chemically. The metaphysical account explains the harmony in terms of potentiality: the first matter is "not so much a body, as a large Shadow, not a thing, but a dusky image of a thing, or the smoaky appearance of an entity ... actually all nothing, potentially all things, which cannot be found but in fancie, and understood in a dream. Our imagination cannot exhibit to us this doubtfull principle, this depth of darkness...." The chemical explanation of the harmony is that the matter has not yet been subjected to the alchemical fires. Thus it is "free from the conflict of Contraries, and disengaged from ... repugnancy, since there is no contrariety inherent in the very Elements, but what is the result of the intention of their qualities.... But in the proper and true Elements, which couple in the generation of mixt bodies, those qualities which are in a remiss degree in them, are not repugnant each to other: for their temperature doth not admit a contrariety" (d'Espaigne 1651, 9-11).

³⁴ Vaughan quotes Hermes Trismegistes in describing these two persons of the Trinity as "the Formative Mind conjoined with the Word" (Vaughan 1984, 61).

³⁵ Hermes Trismegistes 1924-36, 1:114ff.

"first emanation ... of the Holy Ghost into the bosom of the matter." This influx of the Holy Spirit into matter was said to be the preparation of matter by divine love for "Light," which is the "emanation of the Word [Christ], in Whom was life and that life is the light of men."³⁶ The matter so prepared provided the twin principles constituting the physical world: male and female (or active and passive) elemental qualities.³⁷ In d'Espagne's words, the male or active principle is "full of light, and bordering upon the Spiritual Nature," so that it "might be the Principle of motion, life and heat." But the female or passive principle is "wholly corporeal," "drowsie, dark, and cold." From the male principle "comes a motion in the Elementary world to Generation, from whence proceeds life; from the other part comes the motion of corruption, the principle of death. So that is the double fringe or border of the lower world."³⁸

The First Matter was separated through the extraction of "a thin, spiritual, celestial substance, which, receiving a tincture of heat and light, proceeding from the Divine Treasuries, became a pure, sincere, innoxious fire." This fire constituted both the bodies of angels and the "empyrean heaven" of intellectual substances. As described

³⁶ God is described as "the Metaphysical, Supercelestial Sun; the second Person is the Light; and the third is Fiery Love, or a Divine Heat proceeding from both." The Holy Spirit is described as the first agent in the creative process, because "without the presence of this Heat there is no reception of the Light and by consequence no influx from the Father of Lights" (Vaughan 1984, 57). That light is the agent which effects the information of matter is a persistent theme among alchemical writers. (See, for example, d'Espagnet 1651, 26-27, 80-81, 134, 131-137; Sendivogius 1674, 34-35, Agrippa [1651] 1975), 42ff., 146.

³⁷ Vaughan 1984, 57-58. In his commentary on this text, Rudman points out the similarity to Fludd, *Mosaical Philosophy*, I.ii.v, 161: "when the word Fiat was spoken ... the will of the speaker was accomplished by his Son, which, by way of emanation, was sent into the world" (Vaughan 1984, 602).

³⁸ d'Espagne 1651, 15. Putrefaction is what prepares the way for chemical transformation and life. For example, consider the following passage from Paracelsus: "Since ancient times philosophy has striven to separate the good from the evil, and the pure from the impure; this is the same as saying that all things die and that only the soul lives eternal. The soul endures while the body decays, and you may recall that correspondingly a seed must rot away if it is to bear fruit.... It means only this—that the body decays while its essence, the good, the soul, subsists.... Decay is the beginning of all birth.... It transforms shape and essence, the forces of nature.... Decay is the midwife of very great things! It causes many things to rot, that a noble fruit may be born; for it is the reversal, the death and destruction of the original essence of all natural things. It brings about the birth and rebirth of forms a thousand times improved.... And this is the highest and greatest mystery of God, the deepest mystery and miracle that He has revealed to mortal man" (Paracelsus 1969, 141-144).

by d'Espagnet, whose account is quite similar to Vaughan's, this "Empyreaan Heaven" is "seated between the Intellectual and Material heaven, as the Horizon and Finator of each, receiving spiritual endowments from that above, and deriving them down to the inferiour adjoyning middle heaven."³⁹ As transmitter of divine influence, this fiery substance actuates matter, transforming it "into Animals, Vegetables, and Mineralls."⁴⁰ But a remaining portion of this "spirit" is said to have condensed towards "the centre and made a horrible thick night."⁴¹ This condensed spirit provided the subject for a second chemical separation in which the "nimble atmosphere" was extracted. This, like the pure fiery matter first extracted, is a "spirit," though "not so refined as the former but vital and in the next degree to it." The "inferior portion" of this "spirit" constitutes the air from the surface of the earth to the moon—"spread through all things," it "hinders vacuity," "keeps all parts of Nature in a firm, invincible union," and provides "for the respiration and nourishment" of creatures. The superior part "is condensed to a water, different from the elemental" and fills the whole space from the moon to the "empyrean heaven," forming "the body of the interstellar sky."⁴²

The alchemical universe was strikingly similar to More's. It emanated from God to form a hierarchical structure. Nature was a temporal manifestation of the eternal, for the "Inferior bear witness of the Superior, and are their only Proper Receptacle. They are Signatures and Created Books, where wee may reade the Mys-

³⁹ d'Espagne 1651, 12.

⁴⁰ Vaughan 1651a, 81.

⁴¹ Vaughan 1984, 61.

⁴² Vaughan 1984, 61-62. A similar chemical description of creation is given by d'Espagne. Like Vaughan, he attributes the cause of cohesion in bodies to the "moist" properties of this air, "For it is the property of moisture to flow and the continuity of every body is the effect of the moisture of it. For moisture is the glue and joyuncture of Elements and bodies" (d'Espagne 1651, 13; see also 26-27). Likewise, Sendivogius explains creation as separation of matter: "[I]n the beginning of the Creation of the World ... God out of the confused Chaos, in the first place exalted the quintessence of the Elements, & that is made the utmost bound of all things: then he lifted up the most pure substance of Fire above all things, to place his most Sacred Majesty in, and set and established it in its bound. In the Center of the Chaos ... that Fire was kindl'd, which afterward did distil those most pure waters. But because now that most pure Fire hath obtained the place of the Firmament, together with the Throne of the most high God, the Waters are condensed under that Fire ..." (Sendivogius 1674, 90-91; see also 101-102).

teries of the Supernaturall Trinitie.”⁴³ It was a universe bound together by sympathetic relationships and governed by spiritual influences whose quasi-physical powers informed and enlivened gross objects.

3.3. SPIRIT AND MATTER

Central to alchemy was the notion of spirit which animates nature by transmitting divine influences: “For Nature is ... a substantial, active breath, proceeding from the Creator and penetrating all things.” The doctrine of spirit was developed by means of two central metaphors which conveyed religious meanings: the chemical metaphor (emphasizing dynamic processes within nature and ways of controlling these processes in order to move up the ladder of being) and the organic metaphor (within which creation is a birth and the cosmos is an animal biologically descended from God).⁴⁴ Spirit was both a principle of life issuing from “God Himself” (who is a λόγος σπερματικός or spermatic form) and “a moist, silent fire” which “passeth through all things” without which the world would descend into formlessness.⁴⁵

Divine influence was mediated through the *Anima Mundi* or World-Soul, which “hath in the fixed starrs, her particular Forms, or Seminal Conceptions answerable to the Idea’s of the Divine minde: and here doth she first receive those spiritual Powers and Influences, which originally proceed from God.”⁴⁶ So d’Espagne said that the “Celestial is seated in the middle, which having allotted to her the portion of the most perfect bodies, and being replenished with spirits, doth pour out by conveyance of spiritual channels, numberless efficacies and vital breathings” upon the sub-celestial domain.⁴⁷

⁴³ Vaughan 1650c, 21.

⁴⁴ God “is seated above all his creatures, to hatch-as it were-and cherish them with living, eternal influences which daily and hourly proceed from him” (Vaughan 1984, 81). “For as Man is generated out of a Sperm, and again yeelds a sperm of his owne, which is the very same in Nature with that Whereof he was generated: So the Great World was made of a sperm, which God created of nothing, but now that very world is resolv’d and digested into a sperm by its proper inclosed Heate, and this sperm is the very same with that Originall one whereof the world was made” (Vaughan 1651, 79; see also idem 1984, 330, 522-523).

⁴⁵ Vaughan 1984, 65, 114.

⁴⁶ Vaughan 1984, 502.

⁴⁷ d’Espagne 1651, 6; see also Agrippa [1651] 1975, 67-68.

Gross matter and immaterial spirits were on either end of a continuum which included material spirits as the intermediary between the "higher" and "lower" worlds.⁴⁸ Belief in the existence of "Spirits" or "subtle matter" was not confined to alchemical and magical thought. The theoretical conviction that "no Immaterial can operate upon a Material, *Physically*" emphasized the need for some entity intermediate between immaterial and grossly corporeal beings.⁴⁹ There is, as Agrippa said, "need of a more excellent medium, viz., such a one that it may be, as it were, no body, but, as it were, a Soul; or, as it were, no Soul, but, as it were, a body, viz., by which the soul may be joined to the body." As a result spirit is "required to be, as it were the medium, whereby Celestial Souls are joined to gross bodies, and bestow upon them wonderful gifts."⁵⁰ The efficacy of "spirits" as a medium of divine influence is partly rooted in their own materiality. Since both spirits and gross bodies are separated from the same First Matter they have a metaphysical and chemical kinship which makes causal interaction possible.⁵¹

This theoretical conviction was reinforced by empirical considerations about the remoteness of what we now call gases from the senses. As distillation processes for alcohol developed in the fourteenth century, the volatility and fragrance of invisible substances

⁴⁸ The origins of this notion are primarily Stoic. Stoicism stressed the activity of a continuous material medium which was the breath or πνεῦμα which both shaped the Cosmos into a living whole and provided the coherence which formed individual bodies. This breath was material, but more subtle and more active in the higher rungs of the chain of being. Because of its subtlety, the πνεῦμα could be considered both immaterial and material or neither. It is, for example, the principle of mind, and yet it moves as a fluid (Sambursky 1959, 2, 4-5, 22-23, 34-39, 119-127; idem 1962, 3-9, 37ff, 99; and Dobbs 35ff.; Long and Sedley, 266-343; Todd 1978, 137-160; and Lapidge 1978, 161-185). Taylor has shown that the πνεῦμα or subtle matter of the Stoics was simultaneously considered to be potential matter, a physiological medium and a directive agency and that it achieved particular theoretical importance when astrology gained prominence towards the beginnings of the Christian era (Taylor 1953, 1:247-265, especially 249-250, 255). For a discussion of Medieval uses of the notion of "spirits" or "subtle matter," see Hamesse 1984, 157-190; and Walker 1958, 120ff.

⁴⁹ Charleton [1654] 1966, 236.

⁵⁰ Agrippa [1651] 1975, 69-70.

⁵¹ Spirits, like other material entities, were thought to originate from First Matter as its lighter portions became actuated by form or the divine light. "[T]he form having as it were an infinite virtue, did swallow up its matter, and translated it into a nature almost Spiritual and free from any accident." However, the grosser matter, being more resistant to and remote from light and form, retains its sluggishness and imperfection (d'Espagne 1651, 26-27).

lent empirical support to the notion of subtle and active quasi-material spirits,⁵² and the subtlety of these substances suggested that they were analogous to immaterial beings. Consequently, as d’Espagne reported,

Philosophers do not onely call those spiritual Natures, which being created without matter, are onely comprehended by the Understanding, as the intelligencies, Angels, and Devils are accounted to be: but also those that, although they have their original from matter, yet in respect of their great enuity & nobility, do not subject themselves to the Search of the Senses, & nearer approaching to spiritual Beings, are rather understood by reason, than found by sense.⁵³

The subtlety of spirits enables them to penetrate all, imparting cohesion to bodies,⁵⁴ and forming a continuous medium uniting all into a whole.⁵⁵

These various beliefs about material spirits explain the importance assigned to air in combustion, nutrition and respiration. Air was the medium for light, whose powers were suggestive of divine activity. Generative potency was understood as the activity of an ontologically superior entity modeled on light, which is simple and stable, yet capable of multiplying images of itself.⁵⁶ For,

⁵² Taylor 1953, 1:247-265.

⁵³ d’Espagne 1651, 128-129.

⁵⁴ For example, “[Air] ... is a vital spirit, passing through all beings, giving life and subsistence to all things, binding, moving and filling all things. Hence it is that the Hebrew doctors reckon it not amongst the Elements, but count it as a Medium or glue, joining things together, and as the resounding Spirit of the World’s instrument” (Agrippa [1651] 1975, 47).

⁵⁵ “[T]he highest are so intermixt with the lowest, and the lowest interchangeably and inconfusedly with the highest, and have an Analogical likeness, so that the extrems of the whole work by a secret bond, have a fast coherence between themselves through insensible mediums, and all things do freely combine in an obedience to their Supream Ruler.... Wherefore it is well said of Hermes, That whatsoever is below, hath an assimulation to somewhat above” (d’Espagne 1651, 2-3; see also 159-164). Curiously, while d’Espagne assigns this function to spirits (159-164), he also allows that an atomistic interpretation of them is “not far distant from truth” (102-103).

⁵⁶ “[T]o multiply,” then seems to be “the most natural and proper action of light, for from one ray are almost an infinite number darted forth” (d’Espagne 1651, 116; see also 105-106, 136-137). For this reason the Philosopher’s Stone was often compared or identified with Light and Eternal Light (see Josten’s comments in Fludd 1949, 95). Light as a model for spiritual causation also had importance for John Dee. Dee insisted that there is a hidden *esse* in nature which can be employed by the Magus. This *esse* manifests itself in ‘circular rays’ (both substantial and accidental) which are emitted from all natural objects. The similarities and differences between these rays establish the harmonies, orders, and inter-relations

Material principles are passive and can neither alter nor purify, but well may they be altered and purified. Neither can they communicate themselves to another substance beyond their own extension, which is finite and determinate.... It is the light only that can be truly multiplied, for this ascends to and descends from the first fountain of multiplication and generation. This light applied to any body whatsoever exalts and perfects it after its own kind.⁵⁷

The warmth and illumination conveyed through the air by light suggested a penetrating influence imparting form and generative power to matter.⁵⁸

between objects which the Magus manipulates. (For further discussion see French 1972, esp. 93ff. For an account of how Franciscus Patritius, Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon used the metaphysics of light to explain the transmission of *species* or *similitudo* through lines, angles, and figures, and the relation of these explanations to developments in optics, see Pagel 1935, 220ff.)

It is not difficult to see how air too found particular importance for the alchemist. As rays of light are reflected by moving particles of dust, it is easy to imagine that the light has imparted something of its own nature to the particles, which then become conveyers of its influence. The link between air and light is clearly expressed by d'Espagne, who identifies "Spirit" with "a small portion of the purest Air, or the Heaven" which acts as mediator for "the soul or form of a mixt body" which is "a spark of the Fire of Nature, an undiscernable Ray of Celestial Light" (d'Espagne 1651, 107-108). The role of air or "spirits" as a transmitter of divine influence is particularly clear in the following passage from d'Espagne: "The Air from it self hath no quality intense and in the highest degree, but some times hath them on loan else-where. The nature of Air is a middle nature betwixt things below and above, and so doth with ease assume the qualities of those that border upon it.... The whole Air is the Heaven, the floor of the World, Natures sieve, through which the virtues and influences of other bodies are transmitted: a middle nature it is that knits all the scattered natures of the Universe together ...: the easiest receiver of almost all qualities and effects, yet the constant retainer of none: a borderer upon the spiritual nature ..." (ibid., 51-52). Similar views on light and air can be found in Sendivogius 1674, 97-98.

⁵⁷ Vaughan 1984, 95.

⁵⁸ "[A]ll light, joining to itself an enlivening heat, and, passing through all things, doth convey its qualities and virtues to all things" (Agrippa [1651] 1975, 147). The "pure part" of air conveys the "influencies of heavenly bodies" through an "in-set fire and seminal virtues" in "vegetable," "animal" and "vital" spirits which, "in relation to sensible [beings], do assume to themselves the name and right of spirits" (d'Espagne 1651, 128-129). "For all earthly creatures it is the sun that serves as the source of light and life. Its golden beams by the mercy of God are conveyed through the air and form the necessary aetherial nutriment for all life. [And there can be no doubt that] ... the elementarie aire is full of the influences of life, vegetation, and the formal seeds of multiplication, forasmuch as it is a treasure-house, which aboundeth with divine beams, and heavenly gifts" (Fludd 1659, 163; compare (Vaughan 1984, 65). Similar claims are made by Aristotle in *Generation of Animals* 736b.34-37. For example, "All have in their semen that which causes it to be productive; I mean what is called vital heat. This is not fire nor any such force, but it is the breath included in the semen and the foam-like, and the natural principle

Because light and heat were associated both with life and the processes by which metals are refined,⁵⁹ organic and chemical processes were understood to be analogous. The analogy between them was supported by a wealth of observed similarities between the structure and formation of minerals, crystals, and plants, between the circulation of subterranean waters and bodily fluids, etc.⁶⁰ For this reason Vaughan and other alchemists of the sixteenth

in the breath, being analogous to the element of the stars" (Aristotle 1984, 1:1143). Compare Vaughan: "The Aether is a most thin liquid substance, and the Region of it is above the stars, in the Circumference of the Divine Light. This ... receives the Influent Heat of God, and conveys it to the visible Heaven, and all the Inferior Creatures" (Vaughan 1984, 347). The analogy between light and generative powers is also expressed in the notion of a double "fire of nature" which is both "Universal and Particular." It is supposed that the "Universal" fire "is diffused through all the parts of the Universe" exciting the powers of celestial bodies, and imparting generative powers to the Cosmos as a whole and to the seeds which are everywhere. The second fire is "the particular Fire of Nature, [which] is inborn and inbred in every mixed bodie, and individual which flows as a rivulet from that General, and doth work in this microcosm Or little World Man, according to an Analogie with the Sun in the Macrocosm or greater World" (d'Espagne 1651, 80-81). D'Espagne's particularly strong emphasis on a metaphysics of light is indicated by his view that the World-Soul has its seat in the visible Sun (19-20). According to Vaughan (and other alchemists) there is both a "central fire" in the earth and a "fire" in every individual natural object (see, eg., Vaughan 1984, 527).

⁵⁹ "The Effects of this Light are apparent in all things, but the Light it self is denied, or else not followed. We know by Experience, and this in our own Bodies, that as long as life lasts, there is a continuall Coction, a certain seething or Boyling within us.... All Vegetables grow, and augment themselves, they put forth their fruits and Flowers, which could not bee, if some Heat did not stir up, and alter the Matter.... As for Minerals, their first matter is coagulated by this fire spirit, and altered from one Complexion to Another. To which may be added this Truth for Manifestation: if the Minerall Principles be artificially dissolved, that their fire and spirit may be at Liberty, even Metals themselves may be made Vegetable" (Vaughan 1984, 327).

⁶⁰ So Vaughan, for example, describes the initial creation by using chemical, biological, and botanical terms (Vaughan 1984, 458-9). The analogy between these processes is represented as an induction from experience. So Vaughan recommends that "every man descend into himself, and rationally consider those Generations which are obvious to our eyes. We see there is a power granted to man over those Things, whose Original he doth know: Examples and Instances we have in Corn, and other Vegetables, whose seed being known to the Husbandman, he can by the seed Multiply his Corn, and provide for himself, as he thinks fit. It is just so in Minerals, there is a seed out of which Nature makes them, a first matter; and this the Magicians carefully sought after, for they reasoned with themselves, that as Nature by the Vegetable seed, did multiply Vegetables, so might they also by the Minerall seed, multiply Minerals.... At last they considered, God without all question being their Guide, that Nature had for every seed a Vessel of her own, and that all her Vessels were but several sorts of Earth ..." (ibid., 505-506). For a discussion of these notions as treated by English Paracelsians see Webster 1976, 330ff.

and seventeenth century stressed the close analogy between husbandry and alchemy.⁶¹

In alchemical thought, the cosmos was the visible manifestation of invisible processes and forces.⁶² As the physical body of a person was understood to have meaning and value as the expression of an invisible soul, so the universe as a whole and in its parts was understood as the expression of invisible and animating forces. The animation of the universe and the alchemical emphasis upon life was not only, as Koyré has suggested, congenial to the notion of spiritual regeneration central to Rosicrucian alchemy,⁶³ but also expressed spiritual value: vitalism elevates nature to the status of the sacred.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Vaughan 1984, 505-506. Examples of this analogy can be found in Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens* (Oppenheim, 1618), 33-34; Jodocus Greverus in *Secretum Nobilissimum et Verissimum* in *Theatrum Chemicum* (Ursel, 1602), vol. 3:785-786, and Robert Fludd. For a discussion of these authors see Josten's commentary in Fludd 1949, 93ff.

⁶² Consider, for example, this gloss on d'Espagne's *Enchyridion Physicae Restitutae*, sections 19-20, written by Elias Ashmole: "Hence it is that the Power and Vertue is not in Plants, Stones, Minerals, &c. (though we sensibly perceive the Effects from them) but tis that Universall and All-piercing Spirit, that One operative Vertue and immortall Seede of Worldly things, that God in the beginning infused into the Chaos, which is every where Active and still flowes through the world in all kindes of things by Universall extension, and manifests it selfe by the aforesaid Productions" (Ashmole [1652] 1968), 446-447).

⁶³ Koyré has suggested that the notion of an animated universe is motivated partly by the theological doctrine that humans have been made in the image and similitude of God and partly by the rather natural epistemological assumption that what is entirely alien cannot be known. This notion promotes the view that human bodies are the mere physical expression of an immaterial spirit. Understanding of the physical universe is then reached by applying the assumption that we can only comprehend that with which bears similarities to ourselves. As Koyré puts it, the underlying presupposition is that there can be "no knowledge without sympathy, and no sympathy without similitude." This then suggests an analogy between the universe and the human body, such that the physical world comes to be regarded as the visible body of an invisible spirit and the tangible expression of immaterial forces (Koyré 1971, 85-86). Koyré has also argued that vitalist conceptions of nature are natural to religions which emphasize regeneration of spiritual life. Alchemical thought, with its strong emphasis on the idea of life, provides a language which lends itself to symbolic expression of this kind of spirituality (Koyré 1929, 45).

⁶⁴ Vaughan even objects to the Aristotelian account of the heavenly bodies, which posits "outward assistant Spirits," rather than "inward informing principles" as the cause of heavenly motions. And this, in his view, "for no other Reason, but to avoid their Animation" (Vaughan 1650, 20; see also idem 1651b, 22).

3.4. ALCHEMICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Alchemists of the seventeenth century advocated religious, educational, and scientific reform. Rosicrucianism, in particular, was strongly repelled by the divisions and wars which had resulted from emphasizing doctrinal orthodoxy and the externals of religion.⁶⁵ Connected with this dissatisfaction with organized religion was the alchemical emphasis upon distinctive forms of experience which (as a source of religious knowledge) offered hope of consensus among Christians and (as a source of knowledge of nature) were superior to the arid intellectualism of the Scholastics. To understand alchemy, it is then essential to understand the character of alchemical experience, and this must begin with alchemical psychology.

The theoretical foundations of alchemical experience were analogical relations between humans, the cosmos, and God. Humans are microcosmic mirrors of the macrocosm, and by this same token images of God; for God is in the world as human souls are in their bodies.⁶⁶ God, seated above all, pours forth an "inaccessible light"

⁶⁵ Vaughan attributes part of the cause for division to ecclesiastical "Ceremonies and [the] types used in it" which have caused the present "Rents and Divisions of the Church." The Protestants erred in rejecting ceremonies and typology as nothing more than superstition and the Catholics erred in placing "Inherent holiness in them, & so fell into a very dangerous Idolatrie" (Vaughan 1650a, 6). Likewise, Paracelsus was opposed to formal and doctrinal religion, and called vigorously for a passionate sense of participation in the divine: "To die for the faith is bliss; but to die for the articles of faith is a death that springs from false faith." Paracelsus urged a spiritual renewal which taught common people to see their avocations as divine callings (Paracelsus 1969, 184ff., 195).

⁶⁶ Compare the Latin Asclepius, "For there are two images of God; the Kosmos is one, and man is another, inasmuch as he, like the Kosmos, is a single whole built up of diverse parts. For you must note that man, in order that he may be fully equipped on both sides, has been so fashioned that each of his two parts is made up of four elements; and so, in respect of the divine part of him, which is composed of other and higher 'elements,' so to speak, namely, mind [animus], intellect [sensus], spirit [spiritus], and reason [ratio], he is found capable of rising to heaven; but in respect of his material [mundanus] part, which consists of fire, water, earth and air, he is mortal, and remains on earth, that he may not leave forsaken and abandoned all things that are entrusted to his keeping" (Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:305). The notion that humans are a microcosm includes both the claim that they are an image of the living universe, but also (insofar as the universe is an expression of God) an image of God. This is apparent, for example, in the following passage from Sendivogius: "[Thou] ... art created after the likeness of the great World, yea after the Image of God. Thou hast in thy Body the Anatomy of the whole World, thou hast instead of the Firmament the Quintessence of

which (through the medium of the World-Soul) informs and governs (through the further medium of semi-material spirits) the more material parts of the natural world. Light provided an alchemical model not only for explaining organic and chemical processes, but for explaining how humans receive the power of understanding from God:

Light also is a quality that partakes much of form, and is a simple act, and also a representation of the understanding. It is first diffused from the Mind of God into all things; but in God the Father, the Father of Light, it is the first true light; then in the Son a beautiful, overflowing brightness, and in the Holy Ghost a burning brightness, exceeding all Intelligences; yea, as Dionysius saith of Seraphims, in angels it is a shining intelligence diffused ..., yet received in divers degrees, according to the nature of the Intelligence that receives it. Then it descends into the celestial bodies, where it becomes a store of life and an effectual propagation; even a visible splendor. In the fire it is a certain natural liveliness, infused into it by the heavens. And, lastly, in men, it is a clear course of reason, an innate knowledge of divine things, and the whole rational faculty....⁶⁷

In humans, the highest principle or "portion" of the soul is "*mens* or hidden intelligence, commonly called the illuminated intellect." This, said Vaughan, "is that spirit which God himself breathed into man."⁶⁸ Vaughan called this the "spiritual, metaphysical grain, ... simple and without any mixture, descending from the first Father of Lights." This seed of light, which participates in the Divine intellect, governs the "lower" soul, rendering the latter "a mere instrumental agent" or vehicle.⁶⁹

Beneath *mens* (corresponding to "the Coelestial and Angelical natures") is the "rational spirit" beneath which, in turn, is the "sen-

the four Elements, extracted out of the Chaos of Sperms into a Matrix, and into a Skin, which doth compass it round, thou hast most pure Blood instead of Fire, in the vital Spirit where of is placed the Seat of the Soul (which is instead of a King;) thou hast a Heart instead of the Earth; where the Central Fire continually works; and preserves the Fabrick of this Microcosm in its Being; thou hast thy Mouth instead of the Artick Pole; and thy Belly instead of the An-artick, and all thy Members answer to some Celestials ..." (Sendivogius 1674, 104-105).

⁶⁷ Agrippa [1651] 1975, 146-147.

⁶⁸ Vaughan 1984, 77.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 110ff. This notion that the soul is the vehicle of the mind can also be found in the Hermetic literature: "The mind has for its vehicle the soul; the soul has for its vehicle the vital spirit; and the vital spirit, traversing the arteries together with the blood, moves the body, and carries it like a burden" (Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:195-7).

suall, Coelestial, aetherial part of Man” by which we “move, see, feel, taste and smell, and have a commerce with all material objects whatsoever.” The inferior or sensitive soul, which humans possess in common with animals, is an “aethereal” body or vehicle composed of those same quasi-material spirits which constitute celestial bodies and transmit divine influences.⁷⁰ It is by virtue of this etherial body that humans are subject to astral influence.⁷¹

This places humans at the intersection of a whole system of correspondences between the heavenly and earthly realms. As Paracelsus expressed it,

The whole world surrounds man as a circle surrounds one point. From this it follows that all things are related to this one point, no differently from an apple seed which is surrounded and preserved by the fruit, and which draws its sustenance from it.... Similarly, man is a seed and the world is his apple; and just as the seed fares in the apple, so does man fare in the world, which surrounds him.... Each thing has its origin; partly in the eternal, and partly in the temporal. And wisdom, whether it be heavenly or earthly, can be achieved only through the attractive force of the centre and the circle.⁷²

Humans possess, but to a greater degree, that participation in God

⁷⁰ Agrippa clearly states the analogy between the macrocosm and the human microcosm: “This Spirit is after the same manner in the body of the world, as ours is in the body of man. For as the powers of our soul are communicated to the members of the body by the spirit, so also the Virtue of the Soul of the World is diffused through all things by the quintessence [or spirit]: for there is nothing found in the whole world that hath not a spark of the virtue thereof” (Agrippa [1651] 1975, 69-70). (Compare Vaughan 1984, 109ff.) The notion that the soul requires a vehicle of spirits seems partly the result of difficulties in explaining the interaction between immaterial souls and bodies. For example, consider the following passage from Jean Fernel from *I. Fernelli Ambiani, Medicina* (Paris: André Wechel, 1554): “[the Neoplatonists realized that] ... two entirely dissimilar natures cannot be associated together without the interposition of a suitable mean, that our soul, created by the supreme maker of all things, before its emanation and immigration into this thick and solid body, put on as a simple garment a certain shining, pure body like a star, which, being immortal and eternal, could never be detached nor torn away from the soul, and without which the soul could not become an inhabitant of this world. Then they surrounded the soul with another body, also fine and simple, but less pure ... compounded of a mixture of the finer elements, whence it is named aerial and aetherial” (quoted from Walker’s translation in Walker 1958, 119). This idea is found also in More as well as most other opponents of alchemy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Dodds 1963 and Finamore 1985).

⁷¹ Vaughan 1984, 76-77.

⁷² Paracelsus 1969, 38.

which is shared by other creatures. For through emanation God is present in every creature as the

essential or formall centre and circumference, the beginning and the end, the all in all[,] the life and increated light of the world, the midle and centrall soule of the sunne, the lif or soule of the elements, the incorruptible breath, spirit and beinge in all things, which are composed or shaped by them, ... the head, authour, and act of multiplicative propagation.⁷³

The participatory nature of creatures makes them all manifestations of God, but humans stand above other mundane beings, because, as Vaughan put it,⁷⁴

Within us, as in shadows, there shines—albeit obscurely—that Life which is the light of men, which derives not from us but from him whose it is. This he implanted in us so that in the light of him who dwells in inaccessible light we might see light, and in this respect we might excel all his other creatures. In this respect we were fashioned like him, that he gave us a spark of his own light. Therefore is truth not to be sought in ourselves but in the image of God which is within us.⁷⁵

The rational light within humans made them images of God, and was linked to the mystical and moral experiences of alchemy.⁷⁶

3.5. NORMATIVITY

The creation, animated by spiritual influences, was made for humanity. Paracelsus in particular especially emphasized that “[i]t is God’s will that nothing remain unknown to man as he walks in the light of nature; for all things belonging to nature exist for the sake of man.” For this reason it is both the function and duty of humans “to explore everything that lies in nature,” because “[i]t is not God’s will that His secrets should be visible” but that “they become manifest and knowable through the works of man who has been created in order to make them visible.”⁷⁷

The duty of the alchemist was to work. The alchemist imitated

⁷³ Fludd 1949, 124.

⁷⁴ Here Vaughan is quoting G. Dorn, *de Speculativa Philosophia*, chap. i, in Zet-
zner 1613-1661.

⁷⁵ Vaughan 1984, 125; using Rudman’s translation on 623.

⁷⁶ For example, *ibid.*, 123-124.

⁷⁷ Paracelsus 1969, 109.

God's initial act of creation which consisted of separating the portions of First Matter to generate a living cosmos.⁷⁸ This imitation of God was made possible by the incompleteness of creation and the continuity of present cosmic processes with those by which God brought the universe into being. The creation had been left incomplete for the benefit of humans, in order that we might develop that discipline, knowledge, and power which would enable us to reveal the ontological depths of natural objects and to bring the cosmos to final perfection. For,

Nothing has been created as *ultima materia*—in its final state. Everything is at first created in its *prima materia*, its original stuff; where-upon Vulcan comes, and by the art of alchemy develops it into its final substance.... For alchemy means: to carry to its end something that has not been completed.... Accordingly, you should understand that alchemy is nothing but the art which makes the impure into the pure through fire.... It can separate the useful from the useless, and transmute it into its final substance and its ultimate essence.⁷⁹

Because the human function was to perfect the creation, the gathering of appropriate experience was a mission and a destiny. The world had been created to be known and used, and through this process to yield knowledge of God to the person of true faith.⁸⁰ God, who "wants us to be awakened to knowledge in all the great things of His creation," has given us the work of investigating nature "in order that the devil may know we belong to God."⁸¹

This view has roots in the *Corpus Hermeticum* according to which

this earthly part of the universe is kept in order [*servatur*] by means of man's knowledge and application of the arts and sciences [*disci-*

⁷⁸ Consider, for example, this explicit comparison of God's work to the work of the alchemist: "Wee see by Experience that all Individuals live not onely by their own heat, but they are preserved by the outward universal heat, which is the life of the great world. Even so truly the great world itself Lives not altogether by that heat which God hath inclosed in the parts thereof, but is praeserved by the circumfused influent heat of the Deitie: For above the Heavens God is manifested Like an infinite burning world of Light and Fire, so that hee overlooks all that he hath made, and the whole Fabric stands in his heat and Light.... I say then that the God of Nature employes himself in a perpetual Coction, and this not merely to generate, but to preserve that which hath been generated: For his spirit and heat coagulate that which is thin, rarifie that which is too grosse, quicken the dead parts, and cherish the cold" (Vaughan 1650c, 117).

⁷⁹ Paracelsus 1969, 141-142.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 162

⁸¹ Ibid., 109.

plinarum]. For God willed that the universe should not be complete [*perfectum*] until man had done his part.⁸²

The alchemical notion that nature is to be perfected or redeemed was also grounded in biblical theology. Christ's redemptive activity was understood to signify the beginnings of a process whereby the whole of nature, which fell with Adam, is restored.

Although anthropocentric, these views were grounded in a deep feeling for the intrinsic value of nature. Vaughan could not regard redemption as exclusively a human need. "For," as he said,

I know that he [humanity] is principall in the Restauration, as he was in the Fall, the Corruption that succeeded in the Elements, being but a Chain, that this prisoner drags after him: but ... God minds the Restitution of Nature in general, and not of Man alone, who though he be the noblest part, yet certainly is but a small part of Nature.⁸³

It was the role of the alchemist to harness the powers of those "[s]uperiour Beings [which] are coupled with these below ... [, for] those of greater power do communicate themselves with those of a less, that they may inform and compleat them by their emissary spirits...."⁸⁴ This transformation of the lower into the higher is possible because "things above and below were made of the same matter and form, differing only in respect of their mixture, scite and perfection...."⁸⁵

The relation between lower and higher grounded the doctrine of signatures, according to which mundane things bear signs of their spiritual superintendencies:

The order of Reason and of Creation doth require, that the first Copies of things, being first of all concealed in the celestial Natures, were transmitted into inferiour Beings: but in the first they are of a

⁸² Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:303.

⁸³ Vaughan 1984, 518.

⁸⁴ d'Espagne 1651, 115-116.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 31. Compare Vaughan, who says that "the chaine of Ascent which concerns the Matter is performed thus. The Coelestial nature differs not in substance from the Aerial Spirit but only in Degree and Complexion; and the Aerial Spirit differs from the Aura, or Material part of the Anima, in constitution only and not in Nature; So that these three, being but one substantially, may admit of a perfect, Hypostatical Union and be carried by a certain intellectuall light in *Horizontem Mundi super-supremi* [the horizon of the supercelestial world] and so swallowed up of Immortality" (Vaughan 1984, 111; see also the use of the Pythagorean Cube as a symbol of matter in *ibid.*, 470); and Robert Fludd: "corporality and spirituality vary not but in the refining and purifyinge" (Fludd 1949, 110; see also Sendivogius 1674, 34-45).

greater perfection, both because of the greater tenuity and dignity, as also because of their neighboring seats to the Eternal Being: but with us they are ... carved in a grosser and less valuable matter, and more distant from their eternal Principle. There is nothing therefore printed in this lower Margin of the World, which was not first copied in the heavenly Being: neither is their any particular kind of Being of the inferiour natures, which doth not acknowledge the dominion of one Superiour agreeable to it, and which it hath not the secret seal and signature of it. So do things below depend on things above.⁸⁶

Beck has argued that signatures played a role in occult science comparable to the role of mathematical functions in modern science. Both are theoretical relations which bring observations together into a coherent framework. In Paracelsus, for example, signatures provided evidence of causal connections which are grounded in qualitative and sympathetic relations discovered through the study of the resemblances of things. Resemblances were understood to be morphological indicators of a common source which yields common natures and powers. So, for example, the distinctive shape of a kidney bean was a signature indicating a connection between its nature, certain *astra*, and the nature of kidneys.⁸⁷ MacDonald, in his study of astrological medicine, has described the organizational power of these concepts. They made possible a coherent system for explaining how events on apparently separate levels of existence—bodily, social, and moral—could be causally related.⁸⁸ The goal of the magus or alchemist was

to understand how to joyn one thing to another, according to Nature, that we mix not Wood and Man together, or an Ox or any other living Creature and Metals together: but let every thing act upon its own like: and then for a certain Nature shall perform her office.⁸⁹

It was the mission of the Magus to properly read the book of nature in order to advance natural objects to a more spiritual state.

The elevation and perfection of natural objects was effected through rarefaction (digestion, putrefaction,⁹⁰ sublimation, or dis-

⁸⁶ d'Espagne 1651, 153-154.

⁸⁷ Beck 1969, 144-145; see also Pagel 1958, 148ff.

⁸⁸ MacDonald [1981] 1985, 183.

⁸⁹ Sendivogius 1674, 4.

⁹⁰ As Wightman points out, the importance of death and putrefaction as a precondition to generation is not a uniquely alchemical notion. Among others, this view is found in Aristotle for whom putrefaction was a process necessary for one body to be transformed into another, it being necessary that the prior form be lost

tillation) and condensation (or coagulation), which are “the two instruments of Nature, by which spirits are converted into bodies, and bodies into spirits.”⁹¹ The conversion of bodies into more spiritual form was, at least in Vaughan’s case, grounded in a non-dualistic metaphysics.⁹² Nature was understood to be physical and yet permeated by spirit to such an extent that we cannot think of nature without God, nor of God without nature.⁹³ Every natural object possesses a seed which contains an “inbred heat” of the same nature as celestial heat.⁹⁴ The animating “light” or “heat” informs objects with specific properties, grants a kind of life to particular objects, and is the “seed” with which the alchemist works.

This is the secret Candle of God, which hee hath tinn’d in the Elements, it burns and is not seen, for it shines in a dark place. Every naturall Body is a kind of Black Lanthorne, it carries this Candle within it, but the Light appears not, it is Ecclips’d with the Grosnesse of the matter.... The great world hath the Sun for his Life and Candle; according to the Absence and presence of this Fire, all things in the world flourish or wither.⁹⁵

The alchemist’s task was to “open” natural bodies, separate “all the parts thereof one from another,” and finally arrive “at the Prester, which is the Candle, and secret Light of God” in order to discover and liberate that “hidden Intelligence” or “inexpressible Face” which gives the outward Figure to the Body.⁹⁶ This “seed” must be

so that the matter can receive a new form. Otherwise something would be made out of nothing (Wightman 1962, 149).

⁹¹ d’Espagne 1651, 144. Nutrition and respiration were both understood to involve condensation of spirits.

⁹² “We see that God in his work, hath united spirit and matter, visibles and invisibles, and out of the union of spirituall, and naturall substances riseth a perfect Compound, whose very Nature, and Being consists in that union. How then is it possible to demonstrate the Nature of that Compound by a divided Theory of Spirit by its self, and matter by it self? for if the nature of a Compound consists in the Composition of Spirit and matter, then must not we seek that Nature in their separation, but in their mixture.... Besides, who hath ever seen a spirit without matter, or matter without spirit, that he should be able to give us a true Theory of both principles in their simplicity” (Vaughan 1984, 519-520).

⁹³ Vaughan 1984, 520.

⁹⁴ In Robert Fludd’s account the vital power of seeds arises from their participation in Christ whom they also symbolize. The “magnetic” power of seeds is due to their participation in Christ who, in John 12.32, said “When I am exalted I will draw all bodys unto me” (Fludd 1949, 111). (The Greek text of John 12.32 actually reads, “καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντα ἐλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν”).

⁹⁵ Vaughan 1984, 327; see also 336-337.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 354.

extracted and induced to undergo self-multiplication like the seeds of plants and animals.⁹⁷ Material objects are redeemed by “the opening, and shutting of the Chaos”—a “death” and “resurrection.”⁹⁸ Alchemical fires “putrefy” the matter, reducing it to a more subtle state which liberates and enlivens the enclosed “seed.” The seed then, through the power of its “magnetick love,” draws down “the efficacy and virtue of things above, which do increase the strength of the information.”⁹⁹ But this mission could only be accomplished by a consciousness awakened to its own divine character and the presence of God within nature.

The transmutation of metals was the central symbol for an alchemical transformation of consciousness,¹⁰⁰ which (because of

⁹⁷ According to Fludd the alchemical mission is to “set at liberty” the “included spark of light” so that it “might have the better scope to work after his appetit which tendeth to a perfection which is like it self.” For it “doth drawe unto it a multitude of invisible and formall fire of his owne likeness which lurk invisibly in the ayer, after that they ar descended by influence from heaven, to the end that by the assistance and ayd of their bright wings it might with the greater celerity sublime out of the dead and dark putrified body, that being freed from the slime of the dissolved mass of elements, it might fly up unto his native countrey, the kingdome of light and perfection, namly into heaven which is the naturall home of each quintessential substance” (Fludd 1949, 112; see also 120, 132-133, 141). Fludd thinks that the matter is redeemed through the conversion of one element into another through “a compleat rotation,” “wherein earth will be turned into water and water into invisible aer, and it into fire, then doth fire conclud all with a spirituall celestially” (ibid., 123). It is not clear to me that this view is general. d’Espagne and Sendivogius, for example, seem to think that redemption is accomplished not by a change of one element into another, but of each element into a more spiritual state.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 464.

⁹⁹ d’Espagne 1651, 40-41; see also 105-106, 121-124, Ashmole [1652] 1968, 446-447, and Sendivogius 1674, 22-24. For a description of the important biological implications of these aspects of alchemy, see Hall 1969, 1:170ff. On the use of Aristotelian terms to explain alchemical transmutation and the tradition which established compatibility between alchemy and Aristotle’s natural philosophy, see Pagel 1958, 262ff.

¹⁰⁰ This is not to say that on this account they did not believe in genuine physical transmutation. Robert Fludd, for example, calls the transmutation of earthly metals into gold “chymia vulgaris,” which is of negligible importance to the true philosopher who is concerned with the transmutation of the human soul. For him, this means that the search for the Philosopher’s Stone is the search for Christ himself, who resides in us as the quintessence of our lives (*Clavis Philosophiae & Alchymiae Fluddanae*, as cited by Josten in his introduction: Fludd 1949, 96ff. See also Vaughan 1984, 132-133, 152, 164). Chemical transmutation also provided a symbol for death, resurrection and judgment: “Only that is gold which has been cleansed of all dross, which through fire has been brought back to its native state, to lead, which has gone through pure antimony, that is to say, has been brought

the inner conflict "between the two bodies, the visible and the invisible, the material and the eternal")¹⁰¹ could only be achieved through self-mastery: moral purity, mental discipline, and complete devotion to God.¹⁰²

Moral purity was required for that "voluntary separation" of the soul from its body through which spiritual illumination was achieved.¹⁰³ The rational soul must turn away from its usual orientation towards its "inferior portion" in which it is "altered by the celestial influences and diversely distracted with the irregular affections and passions of the sensual nature."¹⁰⁴ The rational spirit is regenerated by "adhering" to the *mens* (that divine "spark," "image," "spirit," or "breath" at the deepest level of the human self), as a result of which it is then "filled with the Divine Light."¹⁰⁵ The body of the purified soul is then "constrained to join in the union," which produces

that miraculous philosophical transmutation of body into spirit and spirit into body about which there is a saying left to us by the wise: render the fixed volatile and the volatile fixed, so that you may gain our mastery.¹⁰⁶

It is significant (because so similar to More's own moral mysticism)

to efflorescence in antimony and has been properly prepared and transformed. And just as this procedure amounts to a testing of gold, so it may serve as a parable for the testing of the resurrected body. For this body too will have to cast off all dross of earthly life, and then it will have to go through an even more difficult test by fire; it will have to go through a melting, a preparation and elaboration comparable to the stage of pure antimony, it will have to suffer a transformation in *aqua fortis* that will make it quite clear and pure" (Paracelsus 1969, 214-215; see also 217-218).

¹⁰¹ "Namely, the stars in him have a different disposition, a different mind, a different orientation than the lower elements.... For instance: the elemental, material body wants to live in luxury and lewdness; the stars, the ethereal body, the inner counterpart of the upper sphere, want to study, learn, pursue arts, and so forth" (Paracelsus 1969, 41-42).

¹⁰² Paracelsus 1969, 41-42, 197-199. "They must be Innocent, and very Humble: not impudent proud Raunters, nor Covetous uncharitable Misers. They must be affable, not Contentious: They must love the *Truth*" (Vaughan 1984, 328). That self-mastery, moral purity, and religious devotion are required is also indicated by the Rosicrucian insistence on the imitation of Christ as taught by Thomas à Kempis (Yates 1972, 225).

¹⁰³ Vaughan 1984, 125.

¹⁰⁴ Vaughan identifies the inferior portion of the soul with the "natural man" of Pauline theology.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 125; using Rudman's translation on 624. See also 132ff.

that Vaughan described this purifying act of devotion as “the true Essential mystery of Regeneration, or the *Spiritual Death*.”¹⁰⁷

The soul, awakened from slumber to awareness of its true nature, is taken “into the Deitie, which is the true Fountain and Center of Life.”¹⁰⁸ Vaughan described this as an experience of “essential contact” with God.¹⁰⁹ Citing I John 3.9, he called it an “influx” of regenerating divine *sperma*.¹¹⁰ The *Corpus Hermeticum* described a similar transformation of consciousness. Its effects included a sense of the relative unreality, unimportance, and impermanence of the ordinary self, normal modes of perception, and mundane modes of being.¹¹¹ New spiritual realities were discerned, so that this trans-

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 127, italics added; see also 134.

¹⁰⁸ Vaughan 1984, 160-161. See also the following: “We are all born like Moses with a Veil over the Face: This is it which hinders the prospect of that Intellectual shining light which God hath placed in us; And ... the greatest Mystery, both in Divinity and Philosophie is, How to remove it” (ibid., 76).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹¹¹ This is expressed, for example, in this exchange between Hermes and Tat. Tat asks “what manner of man is he that is brought into being by the Rebirth?” Hermes responds: “He that is born by that birth is another; he is a god, and son of God. He is the All, and is in all; for he has no part in corporeal substance; he partakes of the substance of things intelligible, being wholly composed of Powers of God.... I can tell you nothing but this; I see that by God’s mercy there has come to be in me a form which is not fashioned out of matter, and I have passed forth out of myself, and entered into an immortal body. I am not now the man I was; I have been born again in Mind, and the bodily shape which was mine before has been put away from me. I am no longer an object coloured and tangible, a thing of spatial dimensions; I am now alien to all this, and to all that you perceive when you gaze with bodily eyesight. To such eyes as yours, my son, I am not now visible” (Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:239-41). The magical and alchemical traditions of the Renaissance ultimately have their origins in the theurgical elements of later Greek Neoplatonism. Plotinus had emphasized the importance of passing beyond abstract reasoning to an intuitive vision of the absolute culminating in union with the One (see, eg., EN 6:7.36). But Porphyry (regarding this goal as too difficult for the ordinary person) recommended the alternative route of theurgy. Theurgy (a system of ritual purification rooted in the magical world-view of the Chaldean Oracles) came to assume a higher religious value for Iamblichus and the Athenian school (Wallis 1972, 3-4). Introversive mysticism like that of Plotinus is also sprinkled throughout the *Corpus Hermeticum*. It is sometimes described as a vision of the Good which occurs through “the inflow of the incorporeal radiance” which “is more penetrating than visible light in its descent upon us.” That the experience is not continuous and is difficult to attain is also emphasized: “Even those who are able to imbibe somewhat more than others of that vision are again and again sunk in blind sleep by the body.” The ineffability of the experience is stressed as well as the loss of sensory awareness: “Then only will you see it, when you cannot speak of it; for the knowledge of it is deep silence, and suppression of all the senses. He who has apprehended the beauty of the Good can apprehend

formation of consciousness was as necessary for knowing philosophical truths as the light of the sun is to the discrimination of colors.¹¹²

The awakened soul was aware not only of God within as a deeper self, but of God without as an object of experience in the natural world. The possibility of such an experience was grounded in alchemical cosmology (which portrayed the world as a living manifestation of deity) and in the metaphysics of participation (according to which every creature has a finite share of the divine nature).¹¹³ Alchemical consciousness experienced ontological

nothing else; he who has seen it can see nothing else; he cannot hear speech about aught else; he cannot move his body at all; he forgets all bodily sensations, and all bodily movements, and is still." Further, the experience is said to involve a loss of self-identity, as "the beauty of the Good bathes his mind in light, and takes all his soul up to itself, and draws it from the body, and changes the whole man into eternal substance" (Hermes Trismegistes 1924-36, 1:189-91).

¹¹² Vaughan 1984, 81.

¹¹³ The notion that the cosmos is the manifestation of deity is stressed in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. For example, it is emphasized that "He who alone has not come into being cannot be presented through sense; and that being so, He is hidden from our sight." But God is yet discernable in the world, because "He presents all things to us through our senses, and thereby manifests himself through all things, and in all things." The divine presence is not discerned by "bodily eyes," but once "the eyes of the mind" have been opened it is understood that "the Lord manifests himself ungrudgingly through all the universe; and you can behold God's image [the Cosmos] with your [bodily] eyes, and lay hold on it with your hands" (Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:157-9). Compare Paracelsus, "The World encloses the eternal, by which it is at the same time surrounded;" and "It is a naive philosophy that puts all blessedness and eternity in the elements of our earth, and it is a foolish opinion that looks on man as the noblest of creatures, since there are more worlds than ours alone.... But doubt will be impossible in the end, when all things are gathered together in their eternal aspects. For in the end much will be discovered and manifested in diverse ways; and I am speaking not only of those things which contain an eternal part within themselves, but also of those which have borne, nourished, and preserved something in which an eternal part is inherent.... And it is contrary to true philosophy to affirm that the little flowers do not partake of eternity; although they wither away, they will nevertheless appear in the assembly of all the generations. And nothing has been created in the *mysterium magnum*, that will not also be represented in eternity" (Paracelsus 1969, 24, 222). See also d'Espagne: "Most of the Ancients conceived the world from eternity to have been figured in its Archetype, and Original, which is God, who is all Light: before the Creation he was a book rowld up in himself, giving light onely to himself, and that work which lay hid in the womb of his own mind, was manifested by extending it to view, and so brought forth the Idaeal-world, as it were in the transcript of that divine Original, into an actual and material world. This is hinted by Trismegist, when he says, that God changed his form, and that all things were in a sudden revealed and brought to light. For the world is nothing else but the disclosed image of an occult Deity" (d'Espagne 1651, 1-2). Compare also John Webster: "[The Eter

depth in nature. God was experienced through the cosmos in the same way that we might be said to experience the personality of other human beings through the medium of their physical organisms. The end result was that "Nothing is invisible, not even an incorporeal thing; mind is seen in its thinking, and God in his working."¹¹⁴

nal Word] ... speaks and breaths forth those central mysteries that lay hid in the heavenly magick, which was in that ineffable word that was with God, and lay wrapped up in the bosome of the eternal essence, wherein were hidden and involved in the way of a wonderful and inscrutable mystery, all the treasure of those ideal figures, which were manifest and brought to light by the Peripheral expansion and evolution of the serviceable word, or outflowing fiat, and so become existent in the matrix or womb of that generative and saetiferous word, from whence sprung up the wonderfull, numerous and various seminal natures, bearing forth the vive and true signatures of the divine and Characteristical impressions ..." (Webster [1653] 1970, 109).

¹¹⁴ Hermes Trismegistus 1924-36, 1:223. In the Hermetic writings, this perception or experience of God in nature often results in strong claims of identity between God and nature: "Now the sense and thought of all living creatures enter into them from without, being breathed into them from the atmosphere; but the Kosmos received sense and thought once for all when it first came into being, and has got them from God.... And the sense and thought of God consist in this, that he is ever moving all things.... And there will never come a time when anything that exists will cease to be; for God contains all things, and there is nothing which is not in God, and nothing in which God is not. Nay, I would rather say, not that God contains all things, but that, to speak the full truth, God *is* all things" (Hermes Trismegistes 1924-36, 1:185). However, metaphysical claims about the participatory nature of created beings are compatible with a distinction between creature and creator. Fludd, for example, analyzes the divine character of creatural natures by drawing on the account of God's presence in the pillar of fire which guided the Israelites through the desert. As the cloud was both, from one point of view, divine, while from another a created being, so God may be said to be in all natural objects without denying their creatural natures: "as the created matter or passive nature of this angelical mixtion was considered, so this soule of the world was called the angel or intellectual spirit of the Lord, and consequently was in that phrayse of speech taken for a creature, and in this sence it is sayed, The Angell of the Lord went before them in a pillar of clowd by day, and a pillar of fire by night, but as the meare formall essence and active nature of this mixtion was respected, so in the same chapter we read that Jehova did goe before them ..." (Fludd 1949, 134). John Webster gives a similar account of how, in the metaphysics of participation, divine attributes are predicated of creatures: "[P]articipations do not truly predicate of those essences to which they are communicated, but of that being from whence they flow; for men participate of the light and heat of the Sun, but it can not be truly predicated of men that either they are the sun, nor truly and univocally that they are of a Solary nature, but onely that participating of its influences and operations they may be truly said to be heatned, and inlightened" (Webster [1653] 1970, 96-97). The metaphysics of participation further grounds the alchemical connection between Natural Philosophy, spirituality and metaphorical or analogical language.

The doctrine of signatures provided a framework for expressing the notion that the physical forms of things were signs or manifestations of an inner spirituality. While alchemists manipulated spiritual forces for practical ends, there was (even in this more practical activity) a religious dimension as well. Hildred Geertz, in criticizing Malinowski for blindness to the religious ideas contained in magic, astutely observes that "the distinction between acts informed by ultimate concerns as against those directed toward immediate goals is constantly blurred when the achievement of a tangible goal is made to stand symbolically for a more general one."¹¹⁵ The alchemist sought to penetrate the outward expression of the Divine in order to arrive at ideas and forms as they exist in Deity itself. Just as the miner discovers what "lies hidden in the mountains by external signs and correspondences," so do all things bear outward signs of their inner natures.¹¹⁶ In Paracelsian science these signatures were the means both of uncovering inwardly active forces to be used in healing and of discerning the spiritual meaning of the natural world.

The correlate of the doctrine of signatures was the doctrine of the "light of nature."¹¹⁷ Both were based on assumptions about the

¹¹⁵ Geertz 1975, 78.

¹¹⁶ Paracelsus 1969, 120-121. For Paracelsus, this is the basis of science, yielding "four ways by which the nature of man and of all living things can be discovered." These are "First, chiromancy; it concerns the extreme parts of man's limbs, namely the hands and feet.... Second, physiognomics; it concerns the face and the whole head.... Third, the substantina, which refers to the whole shape of the body.... And fourth, the customs and usages, that is to say, manners and gestures in which man appears and shows himself.... These four belong together; they provide us with a complete knowledge of the hidden, inward man, and of all things that grow in nature" (Paracelsus 1969, 120-121).

¹¹⁷ In the doctrine of the "Light of Nature," as in so much of alchemy, the spiritual dimension of reality is given a semi-physical interpretation. So we find that the Light of Nature is not only intellectual and divine, but identified with the physical heat associated with life and alchemical practices. So, for example d'Espagne writes that "The heat of Nature and the light of Nature, are really one and the same, for they have a continual and uniform effluence from the same Fountain, i. [e.] the Sun, but are distinguished by their office, for the heat is to penetrate into the most inward parts of Nature, but light is to manifest, and open the outward parts...." (d'Espagne 1651, 59). Likewise, Paracelsus insists that "The light of nature in man comes from the stars, and his flesh and blood belong to the material elements. Thus two influences operate in man. One is that of the firmamental light, which includes wisdom, art, reason. All these are the children of this father. ... The second influence emanates from matter, and it includes concupiscence, eating, drinking, and everything that relates to the flesh and blood" (Paracelsus 1969, 40-41).

divine character of nature. 'Light of nature' sometimes referred to reason itself,¹¹⁸ but at other times to the ontological depth which the alchemist perceived "beneath," "behind," or "within" the outward "husk."¹¹⁹ The search to know things by the "light of nature" was a spiritual quest to attain divinely assisted knowledge of the inner nature of things. Sendivogius illustrated this with the example of "a boy that is twelve years old, and a girl of the same age." Let them, he wrote, "be clothed with garments of the same fashion, and be set one by the other." Confronted with this pair, "no body can know which is the male, or which is the female." For "our eyes cannot penetrate so far," and "our sight deceiveth us, and takes false things for true." But, when their bodies are uncovered, "so it may appear what Nature made them, they are easily distinguished by their sexes." Likewise, "our intellect make[s] a shadow of the shadow of Nature," and the alchemist must seek the inner natures "which God reserves to himself to cover or uncover."¹²⁰ So, as Vaughan put it, "the Period and perfection of Magick is no way physicall.... [I]t ascends *per lumen Naturae in lumen Gratiae* [by the light of Nature to the light of Grace], and the last end of it is truly Theologicall."¹²¹

The sacred character of the natural world made it impossible to divorce natural philosophy from religion. Vaughan, for example,

¹¹⁸ For example, "Everything that man does and has to do, he should do by the light of nature. For the light of nature is nothing other than reason itself" (Paracelsus 1969, 104).

¹¹⁹ In the words of Sendivogius, "Nature hath her proper light, which is not obvious to our eyes; the shadow of Nature is a body before our eyes: but if the light of Nature doth enlighten any one, presently the cloud is taken away from before his eyes, and without any let he can behold the point of our loadstone, answering to each Center of the beams" (Sendivogius 1674, 40).

¹²⁰ Sendivogius 1674, 41.

¹²¹ Vaughan 1984, 129. Paracelsus likewise establishes a strong link between theological knowledge and natural knowledge: "It is nature that teaches all things, and what she herself cannot teach, she receives of the Holy Ghost, who instructs her. For the Holy Ghost and nature are one, that is to say: each day nature shines as a light from the Holy Ghost and learns from him, and thus this light reaches man, as in a dream" (Paracelsus 1969, 181-182). "The body of man is imprisoned in sleep, therefore he must be awakened if he would attain to the wisdom of angels, that is to say, to the wisdom and the art of God.... For God has given His power to the herbs, put it in stones, concealed it in seeds; we should take it from them, we should seek it in them. The angels possess wisdom in themselves, but man does not. For him wisdom lies in nature, in nature he must seek it.... Through nature God's power is revealed to man, through nature he enters into his Father's heritage, in wisdom and in the arts" (ibid., 164).

lamented that so few “study Nature to know God.”¹²² It is, he believed, because God is discoverable in nature that Christianity has epistemic justification. And so he asked that

no man be angry with me, if I ask how Scripture teacheth us to know God? Doth it onely tell us there is a God, and leave the rest to our discretion? Doth it ... teach us to know God by his Works, or without his Works? If by his Works, then by Naturall things, for they are his Works, and none other.... If they say it is by Inspiration, I say too that ... certainly Scripture never inspired any man, though it came it self by inspiration. But if it be replied, that in Scripture we have the testimonies of men inspired, I say this Answer is besides my Question; for I speak not here of the bare Authority or Testimony of Scripture, but I speak of that Doctrine, by which it proves what it testifies.¹²³

To further establish this claim, Vaughan pointed to the manner in which God’s miracles, as recorded in the Bible, served to demonstrate God’s mastery over nature.

Experience was the source of natural knowledge, and the link between natural processes and God made it important to construe the end of natural philosophy as ultimately religious.

This now is the Demonstration we should look after, namely the Expansion, or opening of the Divine Mind, not a Syllogism, that runs perhaps on all Foure. If once wee be admitted to this Communion of Light, wee shall be able with the Apostle to give a Reason for our Faith, but never without it.... [C]ast of the veile that is before your faces, and you shall bee no more blind. God is not a God far off, but God at hand. This is the inward Mystically, not the outward Typicall Supper, and this is the Spirituall Baptism with Fire, not that Elemental one with water.¹²⁴

¹²² Vaughan 1984, 312 and 325.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 516-517.

¹²⁴ Vaughan 1650a, 4-5. Belief in the divine character of the natural world fuels the alchemical dissatisfaction with intellectualist approaches to natural philosophy. So Vaughan describes his turn to nature as a reaction against the emptiness of the scholasticism, as a result of which, he “quitted this Booke-businesse, and thought it a better course to study Nature than Opinion” (Vaughan 1984, 54). In the peculiar alchemical language of the seventeenth century, what this led him to was the discovery of that Prime Matter which, through its close association with the Logos and the Holy Spirit, is the spiritual source of created being. Its exalted spiritual status is reflected in the fact that it is “the power of God, and not of Man” and the manner in which “it is actuated by the fire of Nature, and transform’d without Art into Animals, Vegetables, and Mineralls” (Vaughan 1651a, 80-81). Vaughan writes that “Whiles I sought the world, I went beyond it, and was now in Quest of a Substance which without Art I could not see. Nature wrapps this most strangely in her very bosome, neither doth she expose it to anything but her owne Vitall Caelestial

In the words of the Paracelsian physician, John Webster, a merely speculative science divorced from experiential involvement with nature was less than worthless, being “only conversant about the shell, and husk” rather than the “internal center of natures abstruse, and occult operations” and the “more interiour clossets of nature.”¹²⁵ Instead, “natural philosophy hath a more noble, sublime, and ultimate end, than to rest in speculation, abstractive notions, mental operations, and verball disputes.” It “should lead us to know and understand the causes, properties, operations and affections of nature....” While important, this discovery of natural processes was insufficient in itself, for a science devoted to empirical research and practical applications was incomplete unless it proceeded onward to an awareness of the divine in nature. The goal should be

to see and behold the eternal power and God-head of him, who hath set all these things as so many significant and lively characters, or Hieroglyphicks of his invisible power, providence, and divine wisdom, so legible, that those which will not read them, and him by them, are without excuse; and not to rest there, but to be drawn to trust in and to adore Him, who is the *Causa causans, ens entium*, and God of Nature.¹²⁶

Natural philosophy, when divorced from theology and religious experience, was corrupted and destroyed.¹²⁷

Observation and experiment were important to the practical work of alchemy, so that Vaughan, writing from within that tradi-

breath. But in respect that God Almighty is the only proper, immediate Agent which actuates this matter, as well in the worke of Generation as formerly in his Creation, it will not be amisse to speake something of Him, that we may know the Cause by his Creatures and the Creatures by their Cause” (Vaughan 1984, 55). In some sense Vaughan’s discovery was found, as he said, in nature, and yet he speaks of seeking “beyond” nature to its divine underpinnings.

¹²⁵ Webster [1653] 1970, 149.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 100-101.

¹²⁷ This explains Webster’s qualified praise of Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of the blood, which (while “arising towards the Zenith of perfection”) must be supplemented by the spiritual anatomy of Robert Fludd. For, “though it be grown to a mighty height of exactness, in Vulgar Anatomy and dissection of the dead bodies of men, or the living ones of beasts, birds, and fishes; yet is it defective as to that vive and Mystical Anatomy that discovers the true Schematism or signature of that invisible Archeus, or spiritus mechanicus, that is the true optifex, and dispositor of all the salutary, and morbifick lineaments, both in the seminal guttula, the tender Embrio, and the formed Creature, of which Paracelsus, Helmont, and out learned Countryman Dr. Fludd, have written most excellently (Webster [1653] 1970, 74).

tion, freely claimed Bacon's kinship.¹²⁸ But the formulation of how they yield knowledge gave them a mystical aspect. The true natural philosopher was one who both learned practical results and perceived spiritual depth. Interactions of spirit and matter are "copulation of spirituals with corporeals, whereby [God's] ... uncreated spirit communicating it self, first to the more spiritual and simple Natures, might be conveyed through them, as by so many conduits, to Corporeal Beings," so that "by a sensible creature, the insensible CREATOUR might be apprehended through corporeal and sensible resemblances."¹²⁹ The religious qualities of the world were more than theoretical constructs, they were objects of experience.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Vaughan 1984, 87, 456. So, for example, Robert Bostocke, whom Debus calls the first English Paracelsian, wrote that genuine medicine involves "the searching out of the secretes of nature" through the use of "mathematicall and supernaturall precepts, the exercise whereof is Mechanicall, and to be accomplished with labor." This, he says, is "Chymia, or Chemeia, or Alchimia, & mystica & by some of late Spagirica ars" (Bostocke 1585. Sig. B 1^r, quoted from Debus 1966, 24). So also Porta emphasizes that Natural Magic "is nothing else but the survey of the whole course of Nature" and includes "observing due measures and proportions" (Porta [1658] 1957, 2). Paracelsus often emphasizes the importance of observation and experiment: "Theory and practice should together form one, and should remain undivided. For every theory is also a kind of speculative practice and is no more and no less true than active practice. But what would you do if your speculation did not jibe with findings based on practice? Both must be true or both must be untrue. Look at the carpenter: first he builds his house in his head. But whence does he take this structure? From active practice. And if he did not have this he could not erect his structure in his mind: thus, both theory and practice rest upon experience. Practice should not be based on speculative theory; theory should be derived from practice. Experience is the judge; if a thing stands the test of experience, it should be accepted; if it does not stand this test, it should be rejected. Every experiment is like a weapon which should be used according to its specific function—as a spear is used to thrust, or a club to batter" (Paracelsus 1969, 52).

¹²⁹ d'Espagne 1671, 126.

¹³⁰ Consider, for example, the following passage from Sendivogius in which he describes how the elements transmit divine influences to the most beautiful part of plants—their flowers: "For we must know that Winter is the cause of Putrefaction, seeing it congeals the Vital Spirits in Trees; and when those by the Heat of the Sun (in which there is a magnetick Virtue, attractive of all manner of Moister) are resolved; then the Heat of Nature, stirred up by motion, drives or forceth the subtil Vapour of the Water to the circumference, and this Vapour openeth the Pores of the Tree, and makes Drops distil, always separating the pure from the impure; the pure stays, and is congealed into Flowers, the impure goes into Leaves, the gross and thick into the Bark ...: the Flowers in congealing receive their Colour according to the Heat whereby the Colour is made, and bring with them Fruit and Seed.... So we *see with our eyes*, that Nature creates a Seed our of the four Elements...." (italics added, Sendivogius 1674, 18-19). In a later passage describing the transmission

The metamorphoses introduced into metals by the alchemical fires evoked ecstatic awareness of what lies beneath the outward “husks” of empirical objects:

it is not the Touch, or sight that can discern Intrinsecal, true Complexions. A Body that is outwardly Cold to the Sense may be hotter *in Occulto* where the genuine Temperament lyes, than the Sun himself is *in Manifesto*.

So Vaughan argued that natural philosophers must move beyond the superficial examination of the mere “outside or crust of Nature,” and

change their Abstractions into Extractions; for verily as long as they lick the shell in this fashion, and pierce not experimentally into the Center of things ... [t]hey cannot know things substantially....¹³¹

In the laboratory the alchemist beheld smoke and vapors, and metals transformed by heat to a luminosity of shifting colors. Crude substances were refined, and the refined transmuted into crude once again. As the numinous qualities of natural objects were exposed to sight, so was it revealed that facts and values are fused and that all objects are invested with spiritual significance. In the unity between the spiritual light of nature and physical fire the alchemist brought God into the laboratory which was then converted into a place of worship, spiritual discovery, and redemptive activity.

3.6. IMAGINATION, THE PASSIONS, AND POWER

The imagination is among those characteristics which elevate humanity to an image of God.¹³² As the cosmos was created through

of Salt-nitre through the air as a medium of divine influence providing nourishment, life, and generative power, Sendivogius laments that “this is done daily,” and yet “is not known” (ibid., 45).

¹³¹ Vaughan 1984, 107-108.

¹³² God’s creative power is often described, for example, as rooted in the divine imagination. Koyré, in his study of Boehme (who was both influenced by alchemical writers such as Paracelsus and exerted in turn an influence on later alchemical writers), writes that for Boehme it was necessary to use examples and sensible images in order to progress towards comprehension of deity. Boehme regarded the imagination as generally superior to discursive reason (*Vernunft*) and closer to intuitive reason (*Verstand*) than the understanding, because through the imagination it is possible to grasp a multiplicity in unity, with simultaneous awareness of both the one and the many. This is in contrast to discursive reason, which pro-

the activity of the divine imagination, so human imagination (which according to Paracelsus resides in the invisible or astral body) is the instrument of alchemical power.¹³³ Like the Sun (whose invisible power can burn bodies) the imagination is known only through its effects.¹³⁴ Agrippa compared its operations to the invisible vapors through which diseases are transmitted.¹³⁵ The magus is able to act as a medium for the transmission of forms by using the imagination to receive forms and then impress them on external objects.

These alchemical beliefs were extensions of the general psychological (or pneumatological) assumptions of the seventeenth century which were accepted by Henry More and many others. For example, Glanvill (a close ally of More) argued that "the Phancy of one Man" could "bind the Thoughts of another." He reasoned that the causal mechanisms required for such an action are not different from those by which we govern the actions of our own bodies. Glanvill found a model for such actions in the "string of a Lute" which, when stroked, "causeth a proportionable motion" in another lute nearby through sympathetic action. To explain the power

ceeds by successive steps which isolate and destroy awareness of the interior unity in which forces and qualities interpenetrate (Koyré 1929, 86). The alchemist does not elevate the cognitive value of the imagination at the expense of either sensory experience or reason. The imagination, sensation, and reason are the three "lights" through which human understanding of nature is derived, but reason is the most effective source of knowledge of causes (d'Espagne 1651, 117-118).

¹³³ See, for example, Sendivogius 1674, 106. The parallel between God and humanity extends to the pneumatic instruments by which the immaterial part of humans operates in the body. As divine powers operate through the instrumentality of "spirits," "fire" or etherial matter, so the immaterial part of humans exercises its influence on the body through a "sidereal" or "astral" body which is a vehicle of subtle matter or spirits. So, for example, Paracelsus writes that "In his earthly life man consists of the four elements. Water and earth, of which his body is formed, constitute the dwelling place and the physical envelope of life. And I am not referring here to that life of the soul, which springs from the breath of God ... but to the transient life, of the earthly kind. For we must know that man has two kinds of life—animal life and sidereal life.... Hence man has also an animal body and a sidereal body; and both are one, and are not separated. The relations between the two are as follows. The animal body, the body of flesh and blood, is in itself always dead. Only through the action of the sidereal [or astral] body does the motion of life come into the other body. The sidereal body is fire and air; but it is also bound to the animal life of man. Thus moral man consists of water, earth, fire and air. [But there is also the immortal part of man]" (Paracelsus 1969, 18, 199, 213).

¹³⁴ Pagel 1958, 121ff.

¹³⁵ Agrippa. [1651] 1975, 203.

of one person's imagination to affect the thoughts of another, Glanvill proposed that, in the act of imagining, parts of the brain are agitated in such a way as to produce "a motion in the proxime Aether." These agitations could be transmitted through this subtle material medium in the same fashion as waves through water, causing the brain of a nearby subject to vibrate sympathetically as do strings tuned in unison:

And thus the motion being convey'd from the Brain of one man to the Phancy of another; it is there receiv'd from the instrument of conveyance, the subtil matter; and the same kind of strings being moved, and much what after the same manner as in the first Imaginant; the Soul is awaken'd to the same apprehensions, as were they that caus'd them.¹³⁶

John Webster gave a similar account, and drew evidence from the medical work of Thomas Willis and from Fernel.¹³⁷

The power of the imagination is proportionate to the degree to which it arouses the passions. As Agrippa stressed, it is when the passions are most vehemently stirred by the phantasy and when they "agree with the Heaven, either by any natural agreement or by voluntary election" that the imagination's power is at its greatest.¹³⁸ Imagination is responsible for birthmarks on infants as, stimulated by "the longing of a woman with child," it "signs the infant in the womb with the mark of the thing she longs for." So also is the imagination responsible for "many monstrous generations."¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Glanvill 1665, 146-147.

¹³⁷ Webster argues that "Dr. Willis ... proved that there is a twofold Soul in Man, and that the one which is the sensitive, is corporeal, though much approaching to the nature of spirit.... And we have before sufficiently proved, that the [sensible] species of bodies are corporeal, and it is plain that these operate upon our eyes at a vast distance, and so intersect one another in the air without confusion. And we must in all reason acknowledge that the sensitive Soul, must needs be of as much purity, and energy as those that we call the sensible, or visible species of things, and then it must necessarily follow, that it by the means of the imagination may operate at a great distance, and so words and charms may from thence have power and operation" (Webster 1677, 321-322).

¹³⁸ "For such like passions do vehemently stir up our spirit to the likeness of the Heavens and expose us and ours straightway to the Superior Significators of such like passions.... For our mind can, through imagination or by reason of a kind of imitation, be so conformed to any Star as suddenly to be filled with the virtues of that Star, as if it were a proper receptacle of the influence thereof" (Agrippa [1651] 1975, 203).

¹³⁹ Agrippa. [1651] 1975, 200-203. Such views about the powers of the imagination are not unique to alchemical and magical writers. For example, see similar claims in Malebranche 1958-1984, 1:234ff.

Alchemical self-mastery required concentration upon empowering “thoughts, affections, imaginations, deliberations, elections, contemplations and the like.”¹⁴⁰ The magus must achieve faith or vehement belief.

For our mind doth effect divers things by faith (which is a firm adhesion, a fixed intention, and a vehement application of the worker, or receiver) to him that co-operates in any thing, and gives power to the work which we intend to do. So that there is made, as it were, in us, the image of the virtue to be received, and the thing to be done in us or by us. We must, therefore, in every work and application of things, affect vehemently, imagine, hope, and believe strongly... Therefore, he that works in Magic must be of a constant belief, be credulous, and not at all doubtful of obtaining the effect...¹⁴¹

Magical powers were rooted in human capacities which were focused and amplified through mental and moral discipline aided by divine grace.¹⁴²

Through the passionate concentration and belief which empower the imagination the alchemist magnified the natural correspondence, sympathy, and “magnetick” connection between himself and the cosmos to reveal the nature of the external object within a stratum of the alchemist’s own personality.¹⁴³ So Vaughan

¹⁴⁰ Agrippa. [1651] 1975, 203.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 203-204.

¹⁴² A successful magician is like a saint of Christianity, whose power to live a holy life is rooted in both natural human faculties, like the will, and in special grace received from God. The Magus receives charismatic powers which provide special insight into the powers of nature. For example, Paracelsus writes that “As God awakens the dead to new life, so the ‘natural saints,’ who are called magi, are given power over the energies and faculties of nature. For there are holy men in God who serve the beatific life; they are called saints. But there are also holy men in God who serve the forces of nature, and they are called magi. God shows His miracles through His holy men, both through those of the beatific life and through those of nature; what others are incapable of doing they can do, because it has been conferred upon them as a special gift” (Paracelsus 1969, 139-140).

¹⁴³ Vaughan 1650a, 4-5. Compare Sendivogius and d’Espagne: “[Thou] ... art created after the likeness of the great World, yea after the Image of God. Thou hast in thy Body the Anatomy of the whole World, thou hast instead of the Firmament the Quintessence of the four Elements, extracted out of the Chaos of Sperms into a Matrix, and into a Skin, which doth compass it round, thou hast most pure Blood instead of Fire, in the vital Spirit whereof is placed the Seat of the Soul (which is instead of a King;) thou has a Heart instead of the Earth; where the Central Fire continually works, and preserves the Fabric of this Microcosm in its Being; thou hast thy Mouth instead of the Artick Pole; and thy Belly instead of the An-artick, and all thy Members answer to some Celestials ...” (Sendivogius 1674, 104-105). “[Man’s] ... Soul is an immortal ray of the Divine Light, his Body is a

emphasized that the “hidden natures” to be sought can only be perceived by those “whose eyes are in the Center, not in the Circumference.”¹⁴⁴ To achieve this inner union the Magus must not coldly contemplate the natures of things, but (mindful of their divine origin and spiritual qualities) must be deeply stirred with devotion to God, filled with faith, and committed to the human mission of bringing the creation to completeness.¹⁴⁵ This was the character of the experiential knowledge which the alchemist recommended as an improvement over purely academic methods.

The importance of imagination, passion, and awe in alchemical experience led to scorn of “dry” intellectualism. No philosophy of nature could be genuine and no religion spiritual, unless they sprang from illuminated acquaintance with nature’s inner life.¹⁴⁶

It is in Nature as it is in religion: we are still hammering of old elements but seek not the America that lies beyond them. The apostle tells us of leaving the first principles of the Doctrine of Christ and going on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works; and of faith towards God; of the doctrine of Baptism and laying on of hands; of resurrection and the eternal judgment. Then he speaks of illumination, of tasting of the heavenly gift, of being partakers of the Holy Ghost, of tasting of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come.¹⁴⁷

Without acquaintance with spiritual realities, “Faith, quitting her wings and Perspective, leans on the Reed of a Syllogism,” and reason is stripped of the capacity to judge “those Principles, ... whose Certainty wholly depends on God, and by Consequence is indemonstrable without the spirit of God.”¹⁴⁸

beautified Composure of the Elements. The inward and unperceivable faculties of the Sense, by which man doth comprehend all things obvious, are altogether celestial, and as it were Stars, giving the influence of knowledge of things; the motions and perturbations of the mind, are as it were the Winds & Tempests, Lightenings and Thunders; the Meteors, which breath forth in the Aerial Region of the Spirit, do trouble the heart and the blood. Therefore was man deservedly called a Microcosm ...” (d’Espagne 1651, 106-107). The alchemical theory of perception has its roots in Neoplatonism, which holds, for example, that vision is not to be explained by the object or by any emanation of rays from it, but by the soul, which, because of its connection with the all-containing World-Soul, recognizes some aspect of itself in the object (see Pagel 1958, 50ff., 52: n. 139, 60ff.).

¹⁴⁴ Vaughan 1984, 67.

¹⁴⁵ See Pagel 1958, 54.

¹⁴⁶ Vaughan 1984, 50-51.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴⁸ Vaughan 1650c, 3. The Puritan Paracelsian, John Webster, makes similar claims, but gives them a Calvinistic emphasis on the corruption of fallen nature.

3.7. ALCHEMICAL LANGUAGE

Since ecstatic involvement with nature empowered the alchemist, the Magus made use of a language which, full of analogical associations which suggest spiritual connections between things, assisted faith by arousing feeling. The numinous qualities of the world had to be described in a symbolically rich language capable of welding empirical fact and religious meaning—a language competent to map a web of relations between metaphysics and cosmology, operations effected in the laboratory, biblical imagery, and Christian, Neoplatonic, and Hermetic mysticism. It is well known that Jung's views about the Collective Unconscious were inspired by his study of alchemy. Without embracing the excesses of his analysis, one can recognize his penetrating insight into alchemical language when he described one of its functions as "boundless amplification" to facilitate the psychic transformations which empowered the Magus.¹⁴⁹ Alchemical language not only evoked and amplified mental states, it described (by virtue of the relational qualities of its polyvalent terms and linguistic protocols) the metaphysical structure of a cosmos in which all things were linked, every level of reality mirrored and symbolized the others, and causal interactions occurred between properties and objects which we would connect only through the analogical thinking of a subject.¹⁵⁰ This intro-

While he sometimes refers reason to the light of nature and praises it, at other times he condemns a counterfeit reason as that which destroys faith: 'But if man give his assent unto or believed the things of Christ, either because, as they are taught of and by men, or because they appear probable and consentaneous to his reason, then would his faith be statuminated upon the rotten basis of humane authority, or else he might be said to assent unto and believe the things, because of their appearing probable, and because of the verisimilitude of them, but not solely and onely to believe in and upon the author and promiser of them, for his faithfulness and truths sake, and nothing else; and so 'his faith should stand in the wisdom of man, but not in the power of God, and so the cross of Christ should become of none effect.' ... [F]or reason is a monster, and the very root and ground of all infidelity: 'for the carnal mind is enmity against God ...': but faith is that pure and divine gift and work of God that leads the heart of man in the light and power of the Spirit of Christ" (Webster [1653] 1970, 17).

¹⁴⁹ Jung 1953, 277. According to Jung, some alchemical treatises were written specifically to supply materials for analogies. The example Jung supplies is *Aurora consurgens, quae dicitur Aurea hora*, 185-246, in *Artis Auriferae quam chemiam vocant* ..., 2 vols. (Basel: 1593).

¹⁵⁰ So, for example, when extolling the divine properties and influences of light, Vaughan causally connects the optical properties of light, secondary qualities and subjective responses to beauty. Vaughan observes that there is a kind of lumino-

duced obscurity, because language operated simultaneously on more than one level: 'Mercury' could refer to spirit, 'Sulphur' to soul, 'salt' to a corporeal principle, each of these terms referring at the same time to gross physical substances.¹⁵¹

Alchemical language, while symbolic and analogical, was wedded to a physical realism compatible with empirical research. This can be illustrated through Robert Fludd's explanation of why the symbolic character of the Philosopher's Stone was congruent with its physical reality.¹⁵² Examining types or symbols of Christ which are supposed to be found in the Old Testament (for example, comparing Christ to the rock which Moses struck in order to bring water to the Israelites in the desert) Fludd emphasized that none of the spiritual or moral meanings he had developed through analogy and symbolism were irreconcilable with the historical and physical reality of Christ and Moses and the deeds they performed. For, "this morall interpretation doth not exclud this reall effects of faith from their ocular demonstration, and materiall execution, for it is not unknowne unto every sensible christian that all thes effects have been acted not imaginarily or after a morall interpretation, but tru-

sity "in all those things which are very deare, or very precious to us." This "face of light" has certain analogical similarities to the distinctive states of mind which it produces: the "secret concomitant lustre" of delightful things is analogous to the "Clearenesse and Serenitie of Mind" they produce in the subject who observes them (Vaughan 1984, 470). The exalted and purifying spiritual powers of light are, according to Vaughan, disclosed by nature itself, which "dictates unto us, and tels us that our Happinesse consists in Light, Hence it is that we naturally love the Light, and rejoyce in it, as a Thing agreeable and beneficiall unto us. On the contrarie wee feare the darknesse, and are surprised in it with a certaine Horror, and a Timorous Expectation of some Hurt that may befall us" (ibid., 471).

These subjective responses to light are given a basis in the epistemic properties of the "light of nature" and the physical properties of light. These in turn are connected with the alchemical fire and the active spiritual agency which governs physical processes in nature: "In the House [of matter] ... it may bee found, and the House is not farr off, nor hard to find, for the Light walks in before us, and is the guide to his owne habitation. It is Light that formes the gold, and the Rubie, the Adamant and the silver and he is the Artist that shapes all things" (ibid., 471).

¹⁵¹ Fisch 1952, 755.

¹⁵² While Fludd was not well known in his homeland of England (most of his books having been published in Germany), he was strongly associated with the Rosicrucian movement. His first publication was *Apologia Compendiaria Fraternitatem de Rosea Cruce suspicionis maculis aspersam veritatis quasi Fluctibus abluens et abstergens* (Leyden: 1616). Attached to this work was *Epilogus Authoris ad Fratres de Rosea Cruce* in which he expresses his desire to obtain membership in the society. In his later works he frequently defends the Rosicrucian order. (See Josten's introduction in Fludd 1949, 98ff.)

ly by Christ and his Apostles.”¹⁵³ In fact, the physical and historical realities were the very means by which the spiritual and moral meanings were expressed.¹⁵⁴ If it were not so, God would be understood as “without all things and within nothing.”¹⁵⁵ Miracles, along with all natural processes, were both signs conveying spiritual meanings and real physical events.

Alchemical language was motivated by linguistic ideals similar to those of the allegorical poet. The language was obscure by intention in order to prevent pearls from being cast before swine: to protect the truth, to make it valuable by placing veils in front of it, and to test the qualifications of those who sought nature’s secrets. Alchemists, like Vaughan, frequently expressed concern that their secrets might fall into the hands of those who lacked the proper religious attitude towards nature and who would, as a consequence, abuse these gifts and use them to dishonor God.¹⁵⁶ This concern is reflected in the legend Vaughan related about the ancient Magi who at first attempted “a calme instruction” of other philosophers in methods like those later proposed by Francis Bacon.¹⁵⁷ When their teachings were rejected secrecy was adopted as a moral lesson, “for their principles being once resisted, they could not inflict a greater punishment on their Adversaries, then to conceale them.”¹⁵⁸ Alchemists also suggested that the moral sincerity and religious devotion of prospective adepts were tested by their will-

¹⁵³ Fludd 1949, 149.

¹⁵⁴ For, Fludd writes that “We can not deny but that Christ the author of salvation (whose image and patterne this our mystery is) did rise both body and soule and so of two united together in perfection made one unity.... What shall we therefore imagine him not to be because not materiall, or shall we deeme him not materiall because spirituall, when every forme doth impart a matter, be it corporiall or spirituall. Admit therefore that the Elixir be of a spirituall substance, excludes it therfore materiality, when corporality and spirituality vary not but in the refining and purifyinge.... All things visible wer made of thos things which were invisible by the word of God” (ibid., 110).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 114.

¹⁵⁶ Compare Sendivogius: “they were willing to speak of these things sparingly, and only figuratively, lest Divine Mysteries by which Nature is illustrated, should be discovered to the unworthy ...” (Sendivogius 1674, 104).

¹⁵⁷ “[T]heir positions were not meer noyse and Notion, they were most deep experimental secrets, and those of infinite use, and Benefit: Such a tradition then as theirs was, may wear that style of the noble Verulam, and is most justly called *traditio Lampadis*” (Vaughan 1984, 456-457).

¹⁵⁸ Vaughan 1984, 456-457; see also 482-483.

ingness to struggle with obscurity in search of precious secrets.¹⁵⁹ Vaughan observed that such obscurity is fitting because it is in imitation of nature herself in which the essential and spiritual properties of things are hidden behind the shadow of outward appearances. So, as nature “dispenseth not her light without her shadows,” alchemists “have provided a Veile for their Art.” Further, the obscurity of their language, rich as it is in symbolism, myth, and analogy served as a fitting “ornament,” providing “splendor to the Science.”¹⁶⁰

3.8. CONCLUSION

In the intersection between “higher” and “lower” orders, through causal models suggested by the activities of “subtle” entities such as light and air, alchemy mapped spiritual qualities and religious meanings onto the physical world. So, for example, it was said that

the Celestial Sun hath a correspondency with the Central [visible] sun.... In the superficies the Beams of the one are joyned to the Beams of the other, and produce flowers and all things. Therefore when there is Rain made, it receives from the Air that power of life and joyns it with the Salt-nitre of the Earth....¹⁶¹

At the intersection of these orders was the Magus who cooperated with God to complete the redemption of the cosmos by bringing natural objects to perfection. The alchemical life had meaning as it related itself to the larger story in which human history moves towards its predestined end of extending the redemptive activity of Christ to the whole of nature. Within that larger story were a series of struggles between darkness and light and between the illuminated and the ignorant. Secrets were discovered and encoded for transmission to more receptive generations of the future capable of bringing the mission to completion. The transmutation of a metal, the discovery of curative properties, or the decoding of secrets were the signs of progress towards the perfecting of the cosmos. The investigation of nature was not merely conducted for the satisfaction of human curiosity, but was a form of worship in which

¹⁵⁹ For example, Sendivogius 1674, 44.

¹⁶⁰ Vaughan 1984, 456-457.

¹⁶¹ Agrippa [1651] 1975, 44.

the alchemist cooperated with nature to accelerate processes which naturally occur within her. The alchemist only brought to fruition what was already present in nature and never acted against her. The spiritual qualities of the cosmos imparted a sacramental character to alchemical work: nature manifested deity not merely as a cunningly crafted mechanism shows forth the skill of its maker, but as something informed, interpenetrated, and enlivened by spirit and participating in divinity itself. Nature was a living reality which had value in itself, and not only as an instrument of human purposes. While natural objects had their predestined human uses, the alchemist put them to such uses by uncovering and liberating the spirit contained within their outward husks. In handling and transforming these objects, the alchemist was never to lose sight of their sacred character, controlling nature for heavenly purposes, and elevating it to a higher state.

CHAPTER FOUR

ALCHEMY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ENTHUSIASM

4.1. INTRODUCTION

So far Thomas Vaughan and Henry More seem to have much in common. Both subscribed to vitalistic conceptions of nature; both arrived at their views after a period of academic disillusionment, turning from authors like Aristotle, Cardan and Scaliger to Platonic, Hermetic and mystical sources; both emphasized the importance of moral purification and a death of selfishness as a prelude to illumination; and both placed importance upon introversive and extroversive mystical states, as well as aesthetic and ecstatic experience, as sources of religious insight and experiential confirmation of their religious theories. In all of these respects More seems to have been closer to Vaughan than to Descartes; but, as we will see, More admired Descartes and despised Vaughan. What appears to be a deep affinity between More and Vaughan leaves us unprepared for the vehemence of More's attack.

Vaughan's views were first set forth in two works published in 1650. These were *Anthroposophia Theomagica* and *Anima Magica Abscondita*. Vaughan's magical and alchemical treatises (which included extensive criticism of the universities)¹ were followed by his publication of the first English translation of the Rosicrucian Manifestos.² As Yates has pointed out, even though the translation had certainly been circulated previously in manuscript, its publication

¹ Vaughan was not the first to criticize the intellectual stagnation of the universities and to urge the incorporation of an alchemical and Hermetical course of studies. For example, Rufus Jones has shown that Henry Barrowe (a scholar at Cambridge related to Francis Bacon) was inspired by the Anabaptists to make a call for serious ecclesiastical and educational reforms late in the sixteenth century (*A True Description out of the Word of God of the Visible Church* (1589); *A Brief Discovery of the False Church* (1590)). The specific reforms he called for were quite similar to those advocated by Vaughan and later by Webster (Jones 1932, 42-46; Webster [1653] 1970).

² *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R: C: Commonly, of the Rosie Cross. With a Praeface annexed thereto, and a short Declaration of their Physicall Work* (London: printed by J.M. for Giles Calvert, 1652).

was an event of epochal proportions, as it introduced Rosicrucianism to a much wider audience.³ John Webster (1610-1682), the Puritan "Spagyric" Philosopher, may have been inspired by Vaughan's publications to launch his controversial call for reforming the universities in *Academiarum Examen* (1653).⁴ This sparked the famous debate over education with John Wilkins and Seth Ward.

Under the pseudonym of Alazonomastix Philalethes (which roughly translates as "Whip of the imposter and a lover of truth") More first challenged Vaughan in a pamphlet entitled *Observations upon "Anthroposophia Theomagica," and "Anima Magica Abscondita."* When Vaughan responded in the same year with *The Man-Mouse Taken in a Trap, and tortur'd to death for gnawing at the Margins of Eugenius Philalethes*, More retaliated with *The Second Lash of Alazonomastix laid in mercie upon that stubborn youth Eugenius Philalethes: or A Sober Reply to a very uncivill Answer to certain Observations upon "Anthroposophia Theomagica," and "Anima Magica abscondita."* This was followed by Vaughan's *The Second Wash: or The Moore Scour'd once more, Being A Charitable Cure for the Distractions of Alazonomastix*, but More made no further public rejoinder, since (as he wrote to Anne Conway) "I have no more to say to him then I have sayd already. I should not have thought him worth the saying any thing to had I not had the designe, though I directed my sport to him, to admonish others of their fanaticalness and folly."⁵ This exchange was singularly unpleasant in tone and both sides were dedicated more to heaping abuse than to a genuine exchange of ideas.

³ Yates 1972, 185.

⁴ Webster had studied chemistry around 1632 under the Hungarian alchemist John Hunyades (1576-1650), and in 1634 was ordained as a minister. Sympathetic to the Puritans, he served as a surgeon and chaplain with the Parliamentary army during the Civil War, and later became a nonconformist. Rufus M. Jones claims that he was affiliated with the Seekers and sympathetic towards the Quakers to the extent that he was accused of being one (Jones 1932, 85-90). Robert Schuler, in his study of William Blomfield, a Puritan alchemist of the late sixteenth Century, has explored Puritan attitudes towards alchemy and shown that alchemy was regarded as harmonious with Christianity well before 1600. This tradition permitted Puritan sects to become involved with alchemy. The notion of the alchemical *adeptus* was equated with the Calvinist notion of the elect. As the elect were divinely chosen for salvation, so also the *adepti* were chosen for direct revelations and given grace to achieve knowledge of the Philosopher's Stone (Schuler 1980). The connection between alchemy and Christianity was further strengthened by biblical analogies between the refinement of metal and the purification of souls. (See, for example, *Proverbs* 17.3, 27.21; *Malachi* 3.2-3).

⁵ More to Conway, 28 March 1653, Nicolson 1930, 75.

More's logomachy with Vaughan was followed in 1655 by Meric Casaubon's *A Treatise concerning Enthusiasm, As it is an Effect of Nature: but is mistaken by many for either Divine Inspiration, or Diabolicall Possession*. This treatise has been called "the first effort by an Anglican to attempt a thorough examination of the religious zeal of English Puritanism."⁶ A second (revised) edition was published in 1656, the same year in which More republished his two tracts against Vaughan and added to them a more straightforwardly philosophical discussion of enthusiasm which he entitled *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*. The importance of Casaubon's treatise was the manner in which (taking up More's suggestion of links between alchemy and the "epidemic" of enthusiasm) it explicitly extended More's analysis of enthusiasm to religious radicalism. Casaubon announced his intention to show that

the opinion of divine Inspiration, which in all ages, and among all men of all professions, Heathens and Christians, hath been a very common opinion in the world; as it hath been common, so the occasion of so many evils and mischiefs among men, as no other error, or delusion of what kind soever, hath ever been of either more, or greater.⁷

His strategy was to retard the spread of these "mischiefs" by revealing that the religious experiences of enthusiasts were nothing more than "naturall operations, falsely deemed supernaturall."⁸

Perhaps inspired by Casaubon's more serious treatment of enthusiasm, More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* not only extended his analysis of the nature and causes of enthusiasm, but explicitly broadened the scope of those who fall under the stigma of the "disease" to include Puritan sects, Anabaptists, and Quakers.⁹ More divided enthusiasm into two principle kinds: "Political and Philosophical." Whereas the philosophical enthusiasm charged against Vaughan was primarily speculative and metaphysical, the political enthusiasm of the religious radicals was more sinister, because the subjects of the "disease" came to "fancy themselves great Princes (at least

⁶ See Korshin's introduction in Casaubon [1656] 1970, vii.

⁷ Casaubon [1656] 1970, 3-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹ *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus; Or, a Brief Discourse of The Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasm*, a treatise which he appended to his two tracts against Vaughan and published together with them. This treatise was first published in 1656, then again in the 1662 in the second volume of More's *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.

by divine assignment) and Deliverers of the people sent from God."¹⁰

Some have construed More's attack on Vaughan as "lighthearted," "humorous," and "without malice" and Vaughan's response as "savage."¹¹ This is rather a white-wash of More, since his pamphlets against Vaughan are laden with ridicule, moral condescension, and personal invective, and all of this under the cover of piety, virtue, and compassion. More did not extend to Vaughan the latitude he extended to mystical speculation in the *Philosophical Poems*.¹² Greene has argued that More was motivated by the desire to safeguard a scientific and rational Platonism from the distortions of enthusiasm,¹³ Burnham that More was alarmed by Vaughan's anti-rationalism,¹⁴ and Harth that Vaughan had threatened to discredit More's Neoplatonic sources by employing the "least creditable aspects of neo-Platonism" and so producing "what looked like a bad parody of More's writings."¹⁵ That More was concerned about being classified with Vaughan is clear from the following passage in the *Observations*:

What you have delivered in these pages, bating a few Hyperboles, might become a man of more settled brain.... But while you oppose so impetuously what may with reason be admitted, and propound so magisterially what is not sense, ... you betray to scorn and derision even those things that are sober in the way that you affect, and hazard the soiling of the highest and most delicate truths, by your rude and unskillful handling of them¹⁶

¹⁰ ET 22.

¹¹ Guinsburg 1980, 40; Nicolson 1930, 72, n.1.

¹² There he argued that while Plato and his followers were not oracles, it was legitimate to use their conceptions of God and creation because it was possible to discern "what of undoubted truth they aime at." Further, he allowed that "grosse and figurate representations" of God could express divine attributes and were "convenient for created understanding" as an instrument which could arouse religious affections and lead souls "on in the contemplation of God in easie Love and Triumph." There is, he wrote, "roome enough in the Deity for every man to speak diversely ..., in the representation thereof, and yet no man nor all men together to set out accurately and adequately the nature of God" (CP 141). He recognized that the infinite nature of God is such that none can claim to know the truth of God so sufficiently as to exclude the possibility of error, and that dogmatism is harmful, because the infinite can best be captured not by one theological system but by many. More embraced both imagination and speculation as sources of valid theological approaches.

¹³ Greene 1962, 456.

¹⁴ Burnham 1974, 36.

¹⁵ Harth 1961, 60.

¹⁶ More 1650, 33.

But it is not clear that More's version of Neoplatonism is a distinctly "rational and scientific" contrast to Vaughan's. To cast the discussion in these terms does no justice to the intellectual vitality of alchemy, its importance as a fruitful variant of natural philosophy, its many adherents in the seventeenth century, and its importance to the development of modern science. It also ignores the degree to which More incorporated occult and Hermetic elements into his poems.¹⁷

Because More frequently complained of Vaughan's irrationality and recommended reason as an antidote to enthusiasm, some commentators have been blinded to the real character of More's objections. What reason is, what it can attain to, what is contrary to it, and what is outside its sphere all depend on a host of theoretical assumptions. For example, Descartes, who is often regarded as a rationalist *par excellence*, was understood as an enthusiast by some in the seventeenth century because of his illuminationist language and reliance on private sources of knowledge.¹⁸ Casaubon placed Descartes in the same class as the Quakers and characterized the Cartesian method as a species of "Mystical Theologie, against which I think too much cannot be said."¹⁹ Casaubon was only one of many who made such charges against Descartes.²⁰

¹⁷ The Hermetic elements of More's thought should be apparent from the discussion of the previous two chapters; but to add an additional example of the alchemical cast of More's thought, consider his cosmogony: "the last projection of life from Psyche, which is a liquid fire, or fire and water, which are the corporeall or materiall principles of all things, changed or disgregated ... and again mingled by the virtue of *Physis* or the Spermaticeall life of the World; of these are the Sunne and all the Planets, they being kned together, and fixt by the central power of each Planet and Sunne. The volatile Aether is also the same, and all the bodies of Plants, Beasts and Men" (*CP*, 160).

¹⁸ Heyd 1993.

¹⁹ Casaubon [1656] 1970, 172-173.

²⁰ The "enthusiastical" cast of Descartes' epistemology is apparent from the following passage from his correspondence: "Intuitive knowledge is an illumination of the spirit, by which it sees in the light of God the things which it pleases God to reveal by a direct impression of the divine clarity on our understanding, which in this is not considered as agent, but only as receiving the rays of divinity" (Descartes [to the Marquis of Newcastle?], March or April 1648, *AT* 5:136). The illuminationist language which Descartes shares with alchemists had roots in both medieval mysticism and Augustinian Neoplatonism (Yates 1972, 233; Brann 1980, 103-104). Compare Descartes' words to those of the alchemist George Ripley: "It is impossible for anyone among mortals to understand this [alchemical] art unless he is first illuminated by a divine light" (Quotation taken from Brann 1980, 104). Because of this common family-history and emphasis upon divine illumination as

Anti-enthusiasts of the seventeenth century were not usually opposing revealed religion. After all, prophetic religion in general and primitive Christianity in particular were inherently "enthusiastical," claiming direct revelations from God and the possibility of complete subjection to the influence of the Holy Spirit. The argument was about how to distinguish between reliable and unreliable methods of attaining spiritual knowledge—between genuine and false enthusiasm.²¹ More's appeals to reason must be understood within the context of his theory of the deified soul's privileged access to truth, according to which Vaughan's pretensions were false. According to More, genuine illumination or inspiration is "to be moved in an extraordinary manner by the power or Spirit of God to act, speak, or think what is holy, just and true." But "enthusiasm" is "nothing else but a misconceit of being inspired."²²

As I noted in Chapter 2, More, in his *Philosophical Poems*, was not able to establish a clear distinction between his own brand of illu-

a prerequisite to genuine knowledge, Brann has argued that "the strident polemic between the philosophical rationalists and the Hermeticists which was to be a hallmark of the seventeenth century can validly be viewed as more of a fraternal rivalry within the same family than as a combat between ... radically divergent world views" (Brann 1980, 104). While, in my view, the term "rationalism" is ambiguous and not particularly useful or accurate in this context, Brann has rightly emphasized the close kinship between More and Vaughan.

²¹ So Casaubon's first division was between "naturall" and "supernaturall" enthusiasm, in which the latter was understood as "a true and reall possession of some extrinsecal superiour power, whether divine, or diabolical, producing effects and operations altogether supernaturall." "Naturall" enthusiasm, on the other hand, was described as "an extraordinary, transcendent, but naturall fervency, or pregnancy of soul, spirits, or brain, producing strange effects, apt to be mistaken for supernaturall.... [I]t is indeed (in diverse kinds of it) a very ardor, and nothing else, whereof all men are naturally capable." Counterfeit inspiration was divided into "Contemplative and Philosophical," "Rhetoricall" or "Poeticall," "Precatorie, or Supplicatory," "Musical," "Martiall," "Eroticall" and "Mechanical" (Casaubon [1656] 1970, 22-23). More, in his *Scriptorum Philosophicum* of 1679, included a Latin translation of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* with a number of additional scholia, which were translated into English in the fourth edition of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*. In one of these he gives stronger emphasis to the claim (made in the final pages of his earlier version) that he does not mean to oppose that "true and warrantable Enthusiasm" in which divine rapture is experienced, but from which issue no claims of unique religious insight into scripture or of special religious authority. In fact, he says, "they very ill deserve the name of Christians, who so indulge a sort of dry and hungry Reason, as wholly to exclude all manner of Enthusiasm." Further he argues that milder forms of melancholy can assist devotion by imparting a "salutary sadness" which generates religious concern. (See the introduction by M. V. DePorte, in More [1662] 1966, v.)

²² ET 2.

minationism and the illuminationism of the so-called “enthusiasts.” More wrote of a spiritual “sense” whereby the deified soul was able to discern truth in spiritual and moral matters. The origins of More’s own understanding of the spiritual life in ecstatic, mystical, and aesthetic experiences suggest a deeply “enthusiastical” element in More. He was not unaware of his own cast of mind, and turned it into a qualification for criticizing Vaughan, because “wee are growne near kin in temper and complexion, so we ought Mutually to allow each other in our actings alike, according to our common temper and nature.”²³ According to More, his attack on Vaughan was motivated by “a pure Zeal to the truth of my Creatour” and by “an implacable enmity to immorality and foolery.” Vaughan could not be truly illuminated, because he was not acting, speaking, or thinking “what is holy, just and true” and so could not be under the influence of God. More felt the need to silence Vaughan’s pretensions because “this disease” of enthusiasm “is grown even Epidemical in our Nation, viz. to desire to bee filled with high swoln words of vanity, rather then to feed on sober truth, and to heat and warm ourselves rather by preposterous and fortuitous imaginations, then to move cautiously in the Light of a purified minde and improved reason.”²⁴

More’s own brand of “genuine” enthusiasm linked Neoplatonic metaphysics to the regulation of passion, imagination, and sensation according to norms unshared by Vaughan. More worried that

you so carelessly and confidently adventuring upon that Platonick way, with so much tainted heat and distemper, that to my better composed spirit you seemed not a little disturbed in your phansie, and your blood to be too hot to be sufficiently rectified by your brain, I thought it safe for me to keep those Books I wrote [the *Philosophical Poems*] out of a spirit of sobernesse from reprochfull mistake: For you pretending the same way that I seem to be in, as in your bold and disadvantageous asserting, The Soul to pre-exist, and come into the bodie open-ey’d as it were, that is, full fraught with divine notions; and making such out-ragiously distorted delineaments of that *ἱερὸν ξῶον*, as the Stoicks call it, the enlivened Universe ..., I was afraid that men judging that this affectation of Platonisme in you, might well proceed from some intemperies of blood and spirit; and that, there no body else besides us two dealing with these kinds of notions, they might yoke me with so disordered a companion as your self.²⁵

²³ More 1650, sig. A 1^r.

²⁴ More 1650, sig. A 1^r.

²⁵ More 1651, 35-36.

As I hope to prove, however, More's dispute with Vaughan can best be understood as a disagreement about the qualities of a religiously meaningful life in which More strove to preserve his hegemony over a set of symbols and metaphors to which he had attached specific meanings in his exposition of the spiritual life in the *Philosophical Poems*.

4.2. THE RELIGIOUS MEANING OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

It may seem vacuous to say that More and Vaughan disagreed about the religious meaning of human experience. By 'experience', which I know to be a profoundly ambiguous word, I am trying to refer to something like understanding as it lives through the moment—the fusion of thought, feeling, and sensation that forms a semantic unit of life. By 'an interpretation of experience' I mean the theoretical reflection upon these units which determines whether their semantic content will be accepted *prima facie* or be revised—reflection which assigns these units cognitive, moral, or spiritual weight. It is reflection which decides whether instances of apparent insight are genuine, whether the emotions of a particular moment are to be considered elevating or demeaning, whether they are based on proper evaluations, whether a sensation or feeling was delusive or veridical, and so on.

The set of meanings constructed by this creative process can be displayed by tropological strategies which develop protocols for maneuvering between alternative modes of language. These protocols combine descriptive, evocative, and participatory discourse and exploit the ambiguities of terms to develop links between strata of human existence.²⁶ This means that disagreement about the interpretation of human experience—about its religious meaning—cannot be resolved on the level of theory alone. Theoretical discourse is not privileged, but only one of many modes of language used to exhibit spiritual meanings and their different aspects. Disagreement will be as much about tropological strategies for displaying the spiritual life (how to move back and forth between modes of language) as about formal metaphysics, theology, or nat-

²⁶ For discussions of these linguistic devices and modes see White 1978, 128-9; Tambiah 1990, 105-10; Burke [1945] 1962, xvii-xviii.

ural philosophy. This may explain the wildness and desperation of More's rhetoric. He shared with Vaughan a common stock of images, metaphors, and symbols, as well as theoretical models. He and Vaughan employed these in diverse ways and to different purposes, but these differences were not easily reducible to rule-governed discourse.

4.2.1. Deification and the Meaning of the Passions

In alchemical self-mastery values were placed on awe, mystification, and wonder as affections appropriate to a created consciousness confronted with deity. They were confirmations that cognitive activity had penetrated to the ontological depth of things—their sacred and numinous character. These affections were the conditions of a soul in ecstatic and empowering awareness of the outer and inner surfaces of things and of the fusion of fact and value. The alchemist valued metaphors not only as expressions of underlying metaphysical connections, but for the states of emotion they produced.

More also made self-mastery a condition of deification. Discipline was required for introversive ascension to deity: the soul must turn away from its "outer surface"—passion and sensation—where it intersects with matter. Participation in the divine nature was "a simple, mild, benigne light, that seeks nothing for itself." It was nothing more than "sober" morality conscientiously followed.²⁷

More scorned the alchemical view that the imagination, amplified by passion, is a tool of spiritual power. While higher functions of the imagination could be of spiritual assistance, Vaughan was preoccupied with the lower imagination, which impedes the soul's ascension. The intensity of passion and the attention to sensation and imagination in which the alchemists found religious fulfillment were, according to More, symptoms of disorder and carnality. The ecstatic intensity of alchemical experience was not a sign of religious cognition, but of chaotic passions

so powerfull as to over-master the Melancholist into a credulity, that these flarings of false light in his dark Spirit are not from himself, but from a Divine Principle, the Holy Ghost. And then bidding *a dieu* to Reason, as having got some Principle above it, measures all truth by

²⁷ More 1651, 196.

the greatnesse and powerfullnesse of the Stroke of the Phantasme. What ever fills the imagination fullest, must bee truest.²⁸

The ardor which the alchemist took to be an indication of a purified soul's awareness of divinity in nature was, on More's account, really a manifestation of "lascivious" tendencies due to moral turpitude. It was mere "Religious Heat as yet unpurged quite From fleshly sense and self"²⁹—symptomatic of the "uncircumspect Melancholy" of a soul directed towards corporeality and entangled in "vain and groundlesse imaginations" which originated in the soul's "lower" part. The soul which was spiritually disoriented in this way was "dazled and astounded with the streamings and flashes of its own pertinacious phansie."³⁰ The perception of ontological depth in corporeal objects could only be delusory—"a kind of inward Phrensie" which "answers to the seeing of outward apparitions when there is nothing before the sight."³¹

More linked Vaughan's carnality to the satanic influences which encouraged the rise of religious separatism, civil war,³² antinomianism, and even atheism.

High and windy Notions do but blow up and kindle more fiercely the Fire of Hell in the hearts of men. From whence is Pride, and Contention, and bitter Zeal. This is the pest and plague of Mankind For while the mind of man catcheth at high things, of which she is incapable till she be refined and purged, she doth but fire the frame of her little world by her overbusie motion, which burning in grosse sewel, fills all with smoke. And thus the soul is even smothered and stifled in her narrow mansion. Her first enlargement here must therefore be, by Temperance and Abstemiousnesse: For without this breathing hole for fresh aire, devotion it self will choak her and still more and more, heating her thick and polluted spirits in such a sort, that they cannot be sufficiently rectified by the power of the brain.... [B]eing so immersed in brutish sense, and yet without conscience of sinne; if any body have but the trick to perswade them that Sinne is but a name, he will be a very welcome Apostle to them ... and then (poore souls) through the foulnesse of the flesh, are they easily inveighed into Atheisme it self.³³

²⁸ More 1650, 66-67.

²⁹ Ibid, 190.

³⁰ More 1950, 66-67.

³¹ More 1651, 201; see also idem 1650, 56 and 60.

³² This is ironic considering the fact that Vaughan apparently supported the Royalist cause during the civil war. See Rudman's biography in Vaughan 1984.

³³ More 1651, 191-192.

Vaughan should have concerned himself with “the uncontroverted sober truths of Vertue and Piety ... and the simplicity of the life of God.”³⁴ Instead he had cultivated “a very liquoursome desire to be thought ... some great man in the World” and “a feaverish thirst after knowledge and fame, & ... more after fame by farre than knowledge.”³⁵ The desire for power over nature was, in More’s view, a sign of pride issuing in delusions of grandeur; and the sensual and passionate qualities of alchemical experience meant that at root Vaughan was devoted to materiality and on the road to atheism.³⁶

4.2.2. The Religious Qualities of the Natural Order

The metaphysical kinship between More and Vaughan is apparent in the biological metaphor of the cosmos they shared. But More and Vaughan constructed different religious meanings from this common metaphor. More took the organic structure of the universe to be a sign of its divine origin and providential order, showing it to be more than a mere mechanical system governed by blind chance. But the religious value of nature was instrumental to assisting humans on the path to illumination. Nature participated in divinity, but was below humans and below God. The cosmos was a “sacred animal,” but as a living instrument of God not to be confused with deity itself. For Vaughan the biological link between cosmos and deity extended the axis of religious concern directly into nature.

Vaughan’s worshipful attitude sometimes blurred the line between nature and God, or led him to place more religious importance on nature than on humans. For example, Vaughan exalted the Spirit of Nature or Soul of the World by arguing that the manner in which it shapes matter requires an intelligence capable of purposeful activity. He reasoned that such intelligence is clearly present in lesser animals. A spider spins a web with a mathematical structure and lodges himself “in the Center of his web,” where he premeditates that “he may sally upon all Occasions to any part of the Circumference.” So he must “first know, and imagine that

³⁴ Ibid., 199.

³⁵ More 1650, 1-2; idem 1651, 10-11.

³⁶ Ibid., 201, 11-12.

there are Flies, whereupon he must feede.”³⁷ *A fortiori*, intelligence must then also be attributed to the greater animal whose teleological activity governs the processes of nature as a whole, namely the Spirit of Nature. For,

if the Agent which determinates, and figures the matter, were not a discerning Spirit, it were impossible for him to produce any thing at all.... Let us now apply this to the Spirit which worketh in Nature. This moves in the Center of all things, hath the matter before him, as the Potter hath his clay....³⁸

More complained that this transfers divine properties to creatures and that Vaughan’s reasoning only shows that “the *Ratio Seminalis* must at least proceed from something that is knowing, and be in some sense Rationall, but not have reason and animadversion in it self.”³⁹

More drew the same analogy from Ficino which he had used earlier in the *Philosophical Poems* in order to suggest that the Spirit of Nature and the *Ratio Seminalis* could be compared to “an Artifice cut off from the mind of the Artificer and made self-subsistent, and able to work upon prepared matter, both without knowledge, as being disjoyned from all animadversive essence.” The Spirit of Nature should be understood as “divine art imbodyed in Nature and Matter, and working naturally” according to providential purposes.⁴⁰ More carefully deprived the Spirit of Nature of all intelligence in order to preserve God alone as the source of all architectonic wisdom and to prevent reduction of God to the world. God is not the world, but governs the world in order to bring humans to redemption. The religious character of the world arises from the manner in which it manifests God’s creative power and wisdom and is providentially ordered to bring humans to deification. Nature made an object of religious concern threatens to disturb the contemplative rest of the soul in God.⁴¹

³⁷ Vaughan [1650] 1984, 112.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

³⁹ More 1650, 58.

⁴⁰ More expresses this through a mechanical analogy: “There is an Impulsive cause and End of their working, though unknown to them, yet not unknown to the Authour of them. As in the orderly motion of a Watch, the Spring knows not the end of its Motion, but the Artificer doth. Yet the watch moves, and orderly too, to a good End.”

⁴¹ More 1651, 179-181.

More thought he saw similarly disruptive tendencies arising from alchemical use of the Bible as a source of analogies and symbols of natural processes.⁴² More argued that this is an abuse of the Bible, which God intended not for knowledge of nature, but as “the beginner, nourisher and emprover” of the spiritual life “which is better then all the philosophy in the world.”⁴³ As he wrote to Anne Conway around this time, for “the Hypocrite and disobedient” who read the scriptures “for to peep into knowledge, or to furnish themselves with learned and religious partes,” the Bible is “a snare to their understanding” which fills “them with a very misshapen conceit and imagination, that neither true Divinity nor Nature will allow of.”⁴⁴ The genuinely converted soul only attains to natural and religious knowledge indirectly, through a stronger capacity to make sound judgments due to freedom from corrupt desires.

But the way to this mystery lies in a very few words, which is, a peremptory and persistent unravelling and releasing of the soul by the power of God, from all touch and sense of sin and corruption. Which every man by how much the more hee makes it his sincere aim, by so much the more wise and discrete he will appear, and will be most able to judge what is sound and what is statuous....⁴⁵

More claimed that whoever stands in the true “light of Scripture,” the “firmer and fuller hee is possessed of it, he is more able to judge both of Nature, Reason and Scripture itself.”⁴⁶ More assumed that he had (through his own religious experience and the “death” of self-will) attained to an illumination which revealed to him the error of Vaughan’s understanding of scripture and of nature.⁴⁷ Nature should be appreciated for its providential order and for its

⁴² As discussed in the preceding chapter, the alchemical obsession with nature as an object of religious concern manifests itself in a welding of natural philosophy with biblical theology. Both nature itself and the Bible are divine revelations, and the religious value of nature is such that natural philosophy cannot be divorced from theology. Alchemists understood themselves to be providing a Christian natural philosophy (Vaughan 1984, 517-521).

⁴³ More 1650, 63 and 65; see also 13 and 20.

⁴⁴ More to Conway, 28 Nov. 1652; Nicolson 1930, 68.

⁴⁵ More 1650, 71.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁷ More insists that the rightness of his own position and the error in Vaughan’s would immediately be obvious to anyone who was genuinely submitted to God. However, as I showed in the previous chapter, Vaughan and the alchemists argue in just this way themselves, as they stress the importance of the will’s surrender to God as a prelude to wisdom and insist that the spiritual realities they discern in nature are opaque to those who do not subject themselves to the light of God.

beauty, but purely as a setting in which human souls learn lessons about the importance of ordering and restraining the passions and come to a deifying ascension to God.

On More's account, the religious value of nature is grounded in its role as an instrument of human redemption and this should always be reflected in human attitudes. Knowledge of any kind is of value only through its contribution to the deified life, and so the soul can only achieve purification and illumination if it renounces the desire to achieve knowledge for its own sake.⁴⁸ Because the religious goal is purgation of "self-will" leading to "deiformity," it is misguided to link spiritual illumination with the capacity to achieve detailed knowledge of natural objects in which there is no inherent religious value. The alchemical fascination with nature's secrets is dangerous, because the preoccupation with corporeal things disorients the soul by directing it towards its "lower parts" where it intersects with matter. When investigating nature we must never forget that its religious value is subordinate to human deification. Intellectual contemplation on the distinction between spirit and matter is a properly elevated procedure for understanding the spiritual quality of nature, since it does not draw the soul into involvement with corporeality.

Symptomatic of More's orientation to nature was his fascination with Descartes.⁴⁹ Vaughan had characterized Descartes' philosophy as a mere "whim and a wham," and an invention of his own imagination ungrounded in experience. It was partly because More was provoked by this "rash and unworthy abuse of Des Cartes" that he had taken up a pen against Vaughan: "For I love the Gentleman for his excellent and transcendent natural wit, and like his Philos-

⁴⁸ More [1688] 1966, 251.

⁴⁹ There remains a profound paradox at the root of More's advocacy of Cartesian mechanism against Vaughan's vitalism. Life functions for More as it does for Vaughan as an ontological category to be extended to the whole realm of nature as an expression of its value and divine nature. For this reason, Guinsburg's presentation of More as someone who fought on the side of the moderns "against the vitalism of the Renaissance Hermetic tradition" cannot be taken seriously (Guinsburg 1980, 40). It is precisely to establish the vital nature of the universe that More later proposes his Spirit of Nature and one of Descartes' central legacies was the removal of life as a category separate from the mechanical organization of matter, so that life was not to be understood as a perfection of being distinct from the perfections of inanimate bodies (*AT* 7:134). (For a fuller discussion of the ontological significance of this element of Cartesianism and its implications for the value of creatural natures, see Fouke 1994.)

ophy as a most rationall, coherent, subtile peice, and an Hypothesis accurately and continuedly agreeing with the *Phaenomena* of Nature.... [T]his is he that I call the wisest Naturalist that ever came into my hands."⁵⁰

More's interest in Descartes was already apparent in the second edition of the *Philosophical Poems*.⁵¹ In the late 1640's Ralph Cudworth and Samuel Hartlib had urged More to correspond with Descartes.⁵² In his response to Hartlib's request, More praised the sublimity of Descartes' contemplative methods, and complained that English experimentalists "ly dead and buried in an heap and rabble of slobber sauce experimentes, that are to little or no purpose, then what able wives, marriners, or Mechanicks are able to apply them to."⁵³

When these remarks were made known to the experimentalist William Petty, he was so offended that he wrote a letter demanding apology from More. Petty praised Descartes for his mechanical explanations which employed "sensible principles" of "Matter, Locall Motion, Magnitude, figure, situation, &c." These at least made it "possible to understand what he means" so that "therein hee is much to be prefer'd before the common schoole philosopher, who indeed have nothing else but words, & those such are not ... the Images and Representatives of things." But Petty criticized Descartes for his inattention to experiment.

[F]or it is not sufficient for Suppositions to be accompted Axioms, when they only solve a few phenomena by the help of a strong witt to drive them on, but if they bee true, they must solve all equally well.... And I believe that judicious Men vexed in Multitudes and vexeties of Experiments (though slobber sauce ones) may better see the defects or uselesnes of Descartes his philosophy then such as know no more experiments, then what hee himself hath pickt out, and tells them off to verify his own Imaginations.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ More 1651, 41-42.

⁵¹ More's relations with Descartes have been most thoroughly explored in all of Gabbey's pioneering works cited in the bibliography.

⁵² Hartlib was apparently the central instrument in facilitating this exchange. On Hartlib's importance in the development of English science see Webster 1969; Webster 1967b, 21ff; Hoppen 1976.

⁵³ Webster 1969, 365. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "slobber-sauce" was used in a medical and cosmetic context to refer to a "compound or concoction of a messy, repulsive, or nauseous character."

⁵⁴ Webster 1969, 367.

In his response to Petty, More revealed deep suspicion and disdain for experimental philosophy because of its emphasis on sensory methods, the unregulated curiosity it brought to nature, and its goal of improving the material conditions of human life.

Sensory methods of investigation threatened to disorder the soul and distract it from the faculties which discover religious knowledge.⁵⁵ The natural philosopher should not be motivated with desire for knowledge of nature for its own sake, because the "happinesse of man" consists "more in Righteousnesse and goodnesse then in naturall knowledge," and moral virtue brings more benefit to humanity than "the most magnificent theatre of knowledge advanced to the utmost light imaginable."⁵⁶

Petty had found Descartes' hypotheses wanting in epistemic and social warrant, because they lacked the predictive power by which one of even "a mean capacity" could "foretell the effects of nature ... before they happen, and consequently produce great Noble pieces of art, tending to ye happiness of Mankind."⁵⁷ More worried that the physical and social improvement of humanity might lead to a decline in moral and religious concern:

[For] ... so far as I see Mr. Petty would measure the work of all Philosophy by what it can procure for ye back, bed and bord. Wee shall be a common wealth of rarely improved beastes, not of learned men, that shall know how to keep up and maintaine the low interest of our darling senses to a cows-thumb,⁵⁸ excellent Artists! But the eternal light of God bear witness against blinded mankind, that temperance and humility, from whence ariseth contentednesse, the very tree of life; or what other els ther is of morall or divine virtue, is more for the health of man and the common good, than all that the witt of any mortalls can dig out for their own ease and welfare, though they would teare Natures gutts out, and see her very heart beat.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "I must confesse I have so great a prejudice to externall sense, that if Mr. Petty will promise me that I may amongst his many devices cheapen also the 'prima principia', and carry them away in my pockett, safely clos'd up in some glasse with Hermes seal or secured in some box or galley-pott, I shall so much disfide of my own artifice in opening them, that when I come home, I fear I should finde in the vessels either what are no principles or nothing" (To Hartlib, 12 March 1649, quoted from Webster 1969, 369).

⁵⁶ Webster 1969, 370 and 372.

⁵⁷ Webster 1969, 367.

⁵⁸ "To a nicety" (*OED*)

⁵⁹ Webster 1969, 372 and 370. More is somewhat hypocritical in his attacks on Vaughan and is willing to bring him to the bar of standards he does not deeply hold, for (in spite of the reservations about scientific improvement of mankind he

In More's view then alchemists like Vaughan had, in common with "slibber sauce" experimentalists like Petty, misdirected religious and moral longings which were tainted by an obsession with corporeal things and corporeal benefits. In contrast, Descartes' philosophy (like his own Neoplatonic view of nature) emphasized the contemplation of the "highest causes," and promoted "that more noble pleasure of the minde arising therefrom," which is of more spiritual value than "that naturall itch and curiosity of mens understanding."⁶⁰

More's distrust for natural philosophy founded on observation and experiment was everywhere apparent in the exchange with Vaughan. More heaped ridicule upon the notion that experience could yield knowledge of substantial natures. Because substantial natures are immaterial forms, More compared this "new peece of folly" to the claim that one can see without eyes, "For it is alike easie to see visibles without the eyes, as to see invisibles with eyes."⁶¹ More scorned Vaughan's call for the use of chemical experiments or "extractions" to unlock the inward essences of physical objects and transmute them into a more perfect and spiritual state. Fire, according to the Cartesian interpretation which More adopted, is not fit to perfect and "spiritualize" matter, because it merely sets the particles in motion. Such physical processes, he argued, are not fit "to rectify a visible body but to destroy it."⁶² Vaughan's misguided fixation on corporeal objects is, More said, an "industrious vexing"

expresses to Petty) he demands of Vaughan, "What can you doe in or out of this heat more then other men. Can you cure the sick? Rule and counsell States and Kingdomes more prudently for the common good? Can you find bread for the Poore?" (More 1950, 35). In his correspondence with Petty, More was willing to take a promissory note from Descartes that in the future he would develop experimental and predictive verification of his philosophy, for "to metalls, mineralls, plantes and Animals he has not yet descended." But he demands hypotheses with predictive power from Vaughan as evidence that his knowledge of nature is genuine. More finds Vaughan to have failed to provide either "the evidence of Reason," or "the testimony of notable effect" and concludes that Vaughan's philosophical reflections are no more than "a friske and dance of your agitated spirits, and firinesse of your fancie, of which you will find no fruit, but a palsied, unsteddy apprehension, and unsound judgment" (ibid., 35).

⁶⁰ Webster 1969, 370 and 372.

⁶¹ More 1650, 12. More denies that "any substantiall form" can "be known, otherwise then by what it doe or operate."

⁶² Ibid 74, 151. His later exchange with Richard Baxter indicates that part of More's concern here is that Vaughan may be assigning powers to fire which he himself wishes to exclude from material objects. More is particularly worried about attributing plastic and vegetative powers to fire. (More [1689] 1966, 242).

of nature which makes "her appeare something else then what she really is: Like men on the rack or overwatched witches that are forced many times to confesse that which they were never guilty of."⁶³ Vaughan's impression that he is unlocking the secrets of nature and releasing spirit from its material encrustation is delusive: "So that you do not by a kind of Analysis discover what is at the bottome, but by Genesis modifie the matter into a new dresse."⁶⁴ What is discovered by alchemical processes is then, according to More, not the spiritual foundations of natural objects, but simply another permutation of matter—a discovery with no religious value.

4.3. LINGUISTIC IDEALS

In Vaughan's language, especially in some of the metaphors, More found symptoms of both disordered passions and religious obsession with the natural order. The character of More's criticisms is at first difficult to discern. He sometimes seemed to imply that metaphors are *per se* a meaningless use of language which arises from "hideous empty phansie."⁶⁵ Further evidence of More's hostility towards metaphor can be found in a later letter to Richard Baxter in which he wrote that

when we enquire into the distinct Nature of things, we are to bid *adieu* to Allusions and Metaphors: for to enquire into the proper Nature of a thing, is to search out the adequate Definition thereof, which is to be done in the most certain and clear terms that are, according to Aristotle. And therefore Metaphors are excluded ..., because, whatever is Metaphorically spoken, as he has noted in his Topicks, is obscure and uncertain."⁶⁶

Such linguistic values are surprising since More began his career as an allegorical poet and ended in writing commentaries about Biblical prophecies. But, as I noted in Chapter 2, the metaphors of his *Philosophical Poems* were divested of their metaphorical qualities by elimination of their open-endedness. His work on prophecy followed a similar pattern. He acknowledged that some revealed mys-

⁶³ More 1650, 37.

⁶⁴ More 1651, 96.

⁶⁵ More 1650, 14-15.

⁶⁶ More [1688] 1966, 240.

teries (such as the Trinity and Christ's divine nature) are above even an illuminated reason.⁶⁷ But More treated prophecies as revelations which, while obscure because of their divine nature, were still subject to rational analysis. So, as Hutton points out, in the *Mystery of Iniquity* (1654) More set out rules for decoding prophecies and included a lexicon of "iconisms" or prophetic symbols. And in *Conjectura Cabbalistica* (1653) he developed levels of meaning in Genesis, from literal meaning to decoded symbolic content.⁶⁸

More's attitude here seems to be characteristic of a generally emerging mistrust of metaphorical language. In the seventeenth century worries about metaphor abounded among Puritans, natural philosophers, and even poets.⁶⁹ For example, in *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie ...*, Samuel Parker (who was generally critical of More) wrote of Plato's *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, that

to Discourse of the Natures of Things in Metaphors and Allegories is nothing else but to sport and trifle with empty words, because these Schems do not express the Natures of Things, but only their Similitudes and Resemblances, for Metaphors are only words, which properly signifying one thing, are apply'd to signifie another by reason of some Resemblance between them. When therefore any thing is express'd by a Metaphor or Allegory, the thing it self is not expressed, but only some similitude observ'd or made by Fancy. So that Metaphors being only the sportings of Fancy comparing things with things and not marks or signes of things. All those theories in Philosophy which are expressed only in metaphorical Terms are not real Truths, but meer Products of Imagination, dress'd up ... in a few span-gled empty words ... that have not Notion and Thing enough to fill them out.⁷⁰

Parker, like More, found reliance upon metaphor to be morally objectionable and subversive, for "their wanton and luxuriant Fancies climbing up into the Bed of Reason, do not only defile it by unchaste and illegitimate embraces, but instead of real conceptions

⁶⁷ More 1708, 319.

⁶⁸ Hutton 1984, 187.

⁶⁹ Miller 1971; Jones 1971; Howell 1971, 190. Examples of this mistrust of metaphors can be found in Hobbes, who in *Leviathan* I.5 includes them as one of the causes of absurd assertions (Hobbes [1650] 1983, 114-115), and Locke, who includes them among those "artificial and figurative application[s] of Words" which serve no purpose "but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgment" (Locke [1700] 1982 III.x.34; see also II.xi.2)

⁷⁰ Parker 1666, 74-75.

and notices of Things, impregnate the mind with nothing but Ayerie Subventaneous phantasmes."⁷¹ More's underlying suspicion was that metaphorical language persuades the gullible that "some venerable mystery" has been proved,

when-as, (if it were but with faithfulness and perspicuity discovered and exposed to the judgment and free censure of sober men) it would bee found but either some sorry inconsiderable vulgar truth, or light conjecturall imagination, or else a ghastly prodigious lye.⁷²

Distrust of metaphors was especially pronounced among those involved with the New Science.

Brian Vickers has pointed out that metaphors were employed in natural philosophy by the very authors who criticized their use, and decides that these attacks on metaphor must have been a rhetorical ploy.⁷³ But it may also have been the result of what Hayden White calls "metaphorical consciousness" or "experience of similitude" in which one lives within a metaphorical representation of the world without being aware of its metaphorical qualities.⁷⁴ Or, in More's case, the criticism of metaphorical language may have been intended to contrast metaphors pinned to clear meanings by annotation and commentary with metaphors left open to interpretation.

More was also perturbed by the kinds of passions which Vaughan's metaphors evoked, by the spiritual interpretation he brought to the emotions, and by the kinds of images the metaphors employed in the depiction of spiritual realities. Murrin argues that allegorical poets recognized that "morality followed inevitably" from the "tropological medium" of allegory, because every trope "represents a value judgment made by comparison." "No one," Murrin says, "can juxtapose a man and a toad or a man and an angel without making a moral judgment of some kind, and every trope consisted in such a juxtaposition."⁷⁵ Through his glosses on his poems More had taken great care to establish the boundaries of comparison within his Neoplatonic metaphors and to secure the meaning of their implied moral judgments. But these boundaries

⁷¹ Parker 1666, 76.

⁷² More 1650, 78.

⁷³ Vickers 1987, 13.

⁷⁴ White 1978, 7-13.

⁷⁵ Murrin 1969, 65.

were threatened by the protocols and comparisons introduced by alchemical language which, More says, introduced the “flabby and phantastical” in place of the “cleane and sober.” Vaughan’s discourse was “a non-significant noise and buzze” that polluted the mind, preventing it from sober reflection.⁷⁶ More was particularly disgusted by how Vaughan developed the sexual implications of the organical metaphor of nature to evoke feeling for nature through “a dance of foolish and lascivious words” filled with

heaps of liquorsome Metaphors, of kissing, of Coition, of ejection of Seed, of Virgins, of Wives, of Love-whispers, and of silent embraces, and your Magicians Sun and Moon, those two Universall Peers, Male and Female, King and Queen Regents, alwayes young and never old; what is all this but a mere Morris-dance and Maygame of words, that signifie nothing, but that you are young, ... and very sportfull, and yet not so young but that you are marriageable, and want a good wife that your sense may bee as busie as your phansie about such things those, and so peradventure in due time, the extravagancy of your heat being spent, you may become more sober.⁷⁷

Clearly, Vaughan’s imagination was inflamed by sexual frustration which generates “heat,” and More suggested that regular sexual intercourse might improve his mental abilities.

It has already been noted that alchemical language was consciously evocative as well as descriptive, and that its descriptions functioned on many levels at once—spiritual, chemical, organical, and psychological. More took this polyvalence to be a sign of confusion. More argued that “The Fundamentalls of Science should bee certain, plain, reall and perspicuous to reason; not muddy and imaginary,” and he contrasted the sober clarity of Cartesian mechanical explanations of natural phenomena with Vaughan’s metaphorical language.⁷⁸

The disorder in Vaughan’s soul had also blinded him to the need for caution in depicting spiritual realities through corporeal imagery. More worried that this would lead to corporealizing God and the soul. In his eagerness to make him a cautionary example to others, More seized every opportunity to draw materialistic implications from Vaughan’s most innocent remarks.⁷⁹ Vaughan fell

⁷⁶ More 1650, 14-15 and 28.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

⁷⁸ More 1650, 26.

⁷⁹ More 1651, 46.

especially prey to such tactics when he used the metaphysics of light to explain the nature of the soul. As I showed in Chapter 2, More himself made extensive use of light in the metaphors of his *Philosophical Poems*. God, for example, was compared to a source of light, and natural powers and even creatures were compared to its rays.⁸⁰ However, when Vaughan compared the soul to an “intelligent Fire and Light,” even though he specified that it was not to be understood as ordinary fire, More interpreted Vaughan literally. More inquired, “Doest thou know what fire is? how it is a very fluid body, whose particles rest not one by another, but fridge one against another, being very swiftly and variously agitated.” He then tried to mount Vaughan on the horns of a dilemma by asking whether the intelligence of the rational fire was to be assigned to the form or matter of the fire. If it were the form, “then that is the soul, and this subtile agitated matter is but the vehicle” and the soul itself is immaterial. However, if the intelligent soul were the matter, then

fire being as homogeneall a body as water is, and having all the parts much what alike agitated; how can this fire do those offices that commonly are attributed to the soul? First, how can it organize the body in so wise a structure and contrivement, the parts of this fire tending as much this way as that way.... Secondly how can it inform the whole body of an Embryo in the wombe, and of a grown man? For if it was but big enough for the first, it will be too little for the latter.... Wherefore I say, there ought to be some superintendent Form that takes hold of all these fiery particles and commands them as one body, and guides them ..., and must be the *εντελεχεια*.⁸¹

More concluded that by Vaughan’s account the soul is a material being which could not possess the *sensus communis* and would be mortal.⁸² Vaughan responded that More “hast created a soule of Kitchen-fire and Atoms, and then thou hast spent five pages to confute thy own creature.”⁸³ He went on to emphasize that his conception was of an immaterial soul, capable of dilation and contraction.

The conscious distortion More brought to Vaughan’s words is revealed in his later exchange with Richard Baxter which was published in the second edition of Glanvill’s *Saducismus Triumphatus*

⁸⁰ For example, *CP* 71-72.

⁸¹ More 1651, 166-169.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸³ Vaughan 1651, 173.

(1688). More termed Baxter a “learned psychopyrist” for his willingness to grant a material conception of the soul modeled on fire, and mentioned his earlier exchange with Vaughan.

It is an opinion which I have had no occasion to meddle with since my Juvenile Altercations with Eugenius Philalethes.... He being a Chymist made the Soul Fire.... I was so confident in those days that no Matter whatever was capable of Cogitation, that whenas that Author avouched the Soul to be Fire, and excused it by adding he meant an Intelligent Fire: I, according to the sportfulness of my Pen at that age, told him, That he might as well have said the Soul was a Post, and then excused it again by adding, he meant an Intelligent Post.

Showing much greater respect for Baxter than he did for Vaughan, More promised him that he would avoid the kind of “horse-play” he displayed towards Vaughan, adding “besides, that opinion is not to be thought so ridiculous and contemptible, which the greatest Wits and gravest Authors may seem to have owned.” He further remarked that those who make such claims were “not so to be understood” as if they “made this ordinary, crass and visible Fire the Essence of a Spirit” but as meaning something “more subtile and refined.”⁸⁴

This later exchange with Baxter reveals both More’s calculated misunderstanding of Vaughan and his possible motives. More was, as shown by the discussion above, opposed to Vaughan’s religious preoccupation with nature, to the role of passion and imagination in alchemical thought, to the evocative functions and corporeal imagery of his metaphors, and to the religious importance assigned to work. He was also committed to dualism and atomism as the pillars of Christian metaphysics. Only by insisting on the passivity and inactivity of matter could the atheist be rationally coerced into acknowledging the necessity of immaterial spirits. As he said to Baxter,

[The atomic] ... Philosophy is the most useful for the best ends, and serves to support the main parts of natural Religion the best; namely, the Existence of God, of Genii or Angels, and the Immortality of the Soul.⁸⁵

But the effectiveness of More’s apologetic strategy was threatened by alchemical uses of light and air as models of spiritual causation.

⁸⁴ More [1688] 1966, 191-193.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 224-225.

For it being so absurd at the first sight, that a Congeries or heap of Particles or Atomes should be capable of those most noble Functions of Imagination, Memory, Understanding, nay of sense or Personality, were it not for this awkward Conceit of Air, and Aether, and Fire being continued Substances, and no congeries of Particles, Men would immediately be led into a necessary belief of spiritual Substance properly so called, and then all the main Articles of Natural Religion would go down glib and easie.⁸⁶

Alchemy blurred the distinction between immaterial and material principles by attributing a spiritual dimension to all natural objects and by linguistic protocols which allowed shifts between immaterial and material descriptions of spiritual causation. These suggested the possibility of powers in matter which More wished to confine to immaterial spirits alone.⁸⁷

4.4. THE DIAGNOSIS AND CURE OF ENTHUSIASM

In *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, added to the two tracts against Vaughan when he republished them in 1656, More drew on the physical psychology of his day to provide a diagnosis of the causes of "enthusiasm." His analysis of sensory perception and imagination depicted the soul as of such a nature that "she sometimes may awake fatally and necessarily into Phantasmes and Perceptions without any will or consent of her own." In sensation the soul, "upon the pertinencie of the Object to the Sensitive Organ," is necessarily affected; "nor is it in her power to suspend her Perceptions, or at least very hardly in her power." But in both sensation and imagination the "Inmost seat of Sense is very fully and vigourously affected." Whether we are asleep or awake, the causes of this come from "some more inward Recesses of the Brain." Consequently, "the true and

⁸⁶ Ibid., 225.

⁸⁷ More's worries about a materialistic conception of the soul made it important for him to exclude dilatibility, contractability and indiscerpibility from all matter, including fire. "For unless this be the Nature of a Spirit to be Indiscerpible, philosophy affords no succour to Natural Religion, nor contributes any thing to the assurance of this Mortal Body. But the Soul being Fire, will mingle with the subtile Elements of Des-Cartes, as sure as if it were meerly Breath, it would vanish into the soft Air. But being acknowledged an Immaterial Being ..., and intrinsically indued with Life and Motion, it is able by its Constrictive faculty or Statick power, to maintain its Vehicle against the most blustering winds, and to keep itself from being blown into pieces, and dispersed like Fume or Reek, and from being extinct like a Candle taken out of the Lantern ..." (More [1688] 1966, 247).

real seat of Sense" is "affected in our sleep, as well as when we are awake." This is why dreams compel belief. The sleeping subject's "opinion of the truth of what is represented" to it by the imagination arises from the fact that, when asleep, the inwardly produced motions of the animal spirits (which compose the soul's vehicle) are stronger by far "then any motion or agitation from without." But when a healthy subject is awake, the imagination produces less motion in the animal spirits than what is caused by external objects.⁸⁸

More then hypothesized that if a soul were disordered, so that even when awake the animal spirits were affected by the imagination more than by "all the occurrences and impulses of outward objects," then "the Party thus affected would not fail to take his own Imagination for a reall Object of sense." As evidence More brought up the case of phantom pains experienced in an amputated limb.⁸⁹ He explained the causes of this phenomenon by drawing on Sennert's theory of the causes of "S. Vitus his dance." As the poison of a tarantula infects the body with a "malignant humour,"

so in these distempers we may well conclude that such fumes or vapours arise into the Brain from some foulness in the Body ... as have a very near analogie to the noxious humours or exhalations that move up and down and mount up into the Imagination of those that have drunk the blood of Cats, ... or taken such intoxicating potions as Baptista Porta has described.⁹⁰

One is then led to believe a lie through "the enormous strength of Imagination" which "so farre sinks into Phantasmes that she cannot recover herself into the use of her more Free Faculties of Reason and Understanding." A diseased imagination may "be so strong as to assure us of the presence of some externall Object which is yet not there," or it may lead persons to fancy "themselves to be God the Father, the Meßias, the Holy Ghost, the Angel Gabriel, the last and chieftest Prophet" or to some other religious delusion.⁹¹

The imagination could either be disrupted through a physical cause, such as the "ligation of the outward Organs of Sense," or through moral defects. Specifically, "prejudice and confidence in a conceit, when a man is awake, keeps his fond imagination vigor-

⁸⁸ *ET* 3.

⁸⁹ *ET*, 4.

⁹⁰ *ET*, 7.

⁹¹ *ET*, 4.

ous and entire from all the assaults of Reason that would cause any dubitation."⁹² Pride produces physical effects in the imagination which lead to religious delusion. Those who are obsessed with making "tricks with the Matter (which they call making Experiments)" fall victim to a "desire of knowledge" which becomes "so heated that it takes upon it to become Architectonical and flie above its sphere, it commits the wildest hallucinations imaginable, that material or corporeal fancie egregiously stumbling in more subtil and spiritual speculations." This, More said, is what "commonly makes the Chymist so pitiful a philosopher, who from the narrow inspection of some few toys in his own art, conceives himself able to give a reason of all things in Divinity and Nature."⁹³

The enthusiast was in a physical state analogous to drunkenness; and that "Spirit" which

wings the Enthusiast in such a wonderful manner, is nothing else but that Flatulency which is in the Melancholy complexion, and rises out of the Hypochondriacal humour upon some occasional heat, as Winde out of an Aeolipila⁹⁴ applied to the fire. Which fume mounting into the Head, being first actuated and spirited and somewhat refined by the warmth of the Heart, fills the Mind with variety of Imaginations, and so quickens and enlarges Invention, that it makes the Enthusiast to admiration fluent and eloquent, he being as it were drunk with new wine drawn from that Cellar of his own that lies in the lowest region of his Body....⁹⁵

The "Melancholist" has an unstable temperament: often "faithlesse, hopelesse and almost witlesse," the fits of fervor seem all the more "miraculous and supernatural" when they occur. The enthusiast's "cold and abject fits ... make him also very sensibly and winningly Rhetorical" when discussing the soul's travail in its spiritual journey towards God. So

he speaks of disconsolation, desertion, humility, mortification, and the like, as if he were truly and voluntarily carried through such things; whenas onely the fatal necessity of his complexion has violently drag'd him through the mere shadows and resemblances of them.⁹⁶

⁹² *ET*, 4-5.

⁹³ *ET*, 36.

⁹⁴ "A pneumatic instrument or toy, illustrating the force with which vapour generated by heat in a closed vessel rushes out by a narrow aperture" (*OED*).

⁹⁵ *ET*, 12.

The enthusiast is the victim of a constitution which involuntarily produces a counterfeit spirituality, and believes only on the basis of "Fancies" which "are but the Dreams of men awake" and, like dreams, these "Fancies by day ... will vary and change with the weather and present temper of the Body." Because the "fiery" faith of the enthusiast has such an inconstant basis,

change of diet, feculent old age, or some present damps of Melancholy, will as confidently represent that there is no God, as ever it was represented that there is one. And then having lost the use of their more noble Faculties of Reason and Understanding, they must according to the course of Nature be as bold Atheists now, as they were before confident Enthusiasts.⁹⁷

Enthusiastic faith was then without redemptive value because it was based not on genuine spiritual insight, but on subjective states of feeling and imagination produced by erratic physical causes. Having connected this drunkenness of spirit to both moral weakness and physical distemper, having evacuated all meaning and authority from the religious experiences of both the alchemists and religious radicals, More ended by suggesting various cures for enthusiasm.

More recommended physical activity, fresh air and devotional exercises "whereby the Blood is ventilated and purged from dark oppressing vapors." The basis of this recommendation was the view that deep inhalations combined with "the force or weight of Meditation" "ventilate and purge the blood and Spirits, and draw in larger Draughts of the pure Air or Aether." In this way "we strengthen and increase the Luciform Body" or aerial vehicle of the soul and "imbibe ... at length God himself, in a sort, into our Souls." The purification of the "aerial" or etherial vehical made possible certain "divine sensations" and converted the faculty of reason into a "boniform faculty," which enabled the mind to discover and choose the highest good.⁹⁸

However, exercises of prayer had to be approached with caution, because the devotional fervor of the radicals was well known and

⁹⁶ *ET*, 13.

⁹⁷ *ET*, 1.

⁹⁸ Crocker 1990a, 139-140; Ward 1710, 102-103. See also *EE* Lib. 3, chap. 3; More to Conway, 7 June 1654, Nicolson 1930, 100-101; *IS* 210-211). As documented by D.P. Walker, More's views are the product of the theory of medical spirits which was shared by Melanchthon and many others (Walker 1984, 223-244).

because "hot and zealous" addresses to God threatened to produce the humoral imbalance that causes enthusiastical delusions. To avoid these dangerous effects More recommended temperance—abstinence from "all hot or heightening" food and drink, as well as "from all venerous pleasures and tactual delights of the Body" in order to quench the "hidden and lurking fumes of Lust" which taint the imagination. Even better than a moderate diet was fasting, which prevents an unwanted increase in the "feculency of our intemperance into those more precious parts of the Body, the Brains and Animal Spirits." Finally, More urged that humility be cultivated through that death of self and "entire Submission to the will of God" which leaves one entirely deprived of "all desire of singularity or attracting of the eyes of men upon a mans own person."⁹⁹

This cure of enthusiasm would lead, More claimed, to the liberation of reason from the bondage of an infected imagination. By reason he meant a "Composure of Mind" which is so "settled and cautious" that it "will suspect every high-flown & forward Fancy that endeavours to carry away the assent before deliberate examination." A mind having attained this temperament would not be "gulled" by "vigour or garishnesse," but would try every object of the imagination by "the known Faculties of the Soul, which are either the Common notions that all men in their wits agree upon, or the Evidence of outward Sense, or else a clear and distinct Deduction from these."¹⁰⁰ No more exalted religious insight could be attained than by this sober rationality. The thirst for deeper spiritual insight is not only unwholesome, but a form of delusion comparable to "a company of men travailing by night with links, torches and lanthorns" befooled by "wonderful strains of Eloquence" to "foot it in the dark with hazard of knocking their noses against the next Tree" rather than "to continue the use of those convenient lights that they had in their sober temper prepared for the safety of their journey."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *ET*, 37.

¹⁰⁰ *ET*, 38.

¹⁰¹ *ET*, 38-39.

4.5. CONCLUSION

Lichtenstein has emphasized the degree to which More and the Cambridge Platonists interpreted their Neoplatonic heritage in terms of an ethics of sobriety which glorified serenity, peace, and tranquility of mind.¹⁰² More sharply distinguished the rationality of his own mysticism from Vaughan's ecstatic religion of nature. "For," he said,

God doth not ride me as a horse and guide me I know not whither my self; but converses with me as a friend, and speaks to me in such a Dialect as I understand fully, and can make others understand that have not made shipwreck of the faculties that God hath given them, by Superstition or Sensuality.

Vaughan's wonderment at nature and his search to release nature's powers were despised as goals of "an adulterous generation" which "onely seeks after a signe" or of "idiots, such as love to stare on a dexterous jugler when he playes his tricks." More speculated that the corrupt desires so fueled by alchemy and natural magic were the reason "why miracles are no more frequent in the world," for God intends a "higher dispensation."¹⁰³

But in one surprising passage (after first chiding Vaughan for his unwholesome desire for knowledge of nature's secrets and for his religious pretensions and after again advancing the fundamental importance of a moral mysticism ending in "deiformity") More went on to suggest that the cognitive value of his own experiences rested in an ecstatic quality which linked humans with nature and God:

How lovely, how magnificent a state is the soul of man in, when the life of God inactuating her, shoots her along with himself through Heaven and Earth, makes her unite with, and after a sort feel herself animate the whole world, as if she had become God and all things.... This is to become Deiform, to be thus suspended (not by imagination, but by union of life, ... joyning centers with God) and by a sensible touch to be held up from the clotty dark Personality of this compacted body. Here is love, here is freedome, here is justice and equity in the super-essential causes of them. He that is here, looks upon all things as one, and on himself, if he can then mind himself, as a part of the whole.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Lichtenstein 1962, 55-69, 96.

¹⁰³ More 1651, 48-50.

¹⁰⁴ More 1651, 42-44. This and other passages, as well as his autobiographical

Several things about this passage are particularly striking. The experience was inherently ecstatic as the self was described as breaking free of normal modes of consciousness to arrive at a new awareness of the self. In this new awareness, the self no longer stood in isolation from God or the rest of creation. More inadvertently displayed the value of ecstasy and extroversive mysticism (or nature-mysticism) as elements of his own spirituality. More's language was suggestive of the very pantheistic tendencies he found in Vaughan.

More bragged to Vaughan that he had been purified by the "true Chymicall fire" which had "crystallized" his soul "into a bright Throne, and shining Habitation of the divine Majesty," resulting in a privileged epistemic standing as this "free light" within acted as an "Oracle," a "Counsellour," and a "faithfull Instructor and guide," teaching him "in a very sensible manner, the vast difference betwixt the truth and freedome of the Spirit, and anxious impostures of this dark Personality and earthly bondage of the body." God, he claimed, had become his own

familiar friend, & though he speak to others aloof off in outward Religions and Parables, yet he leads this man by the hand teaching him intelligible documents upon all the objects of his Providence, speaks to him plainly in his own language; sweetly insinuates himself, and possesses all his faculties, Understanding, Reason, and Memory."¹⁰⁵

This claim to illumination combined with the extravagance of some of his own speculations subjected More himself to accusations of enthusiasm by those who turned More's own anti-enthusiastical rhetoric against him.¹⁰⁶

More's attack on Vaughan was marred by moral inconsistencies which are hard to ignore. For example, More took Vaughan's disparagement of Aristotle as an indication that Vaughan's "heart is possessed of uncleanness and hatred, which the law of Christ interprets as murder." A real Christian knows only "pure and peacable

description of his conversion, make it difficult to swallow Lichtenstein's claim that More was not a mystic and that "The ecstasy and the intensity which mark the various stages of the mystical experience, the piercing and consuming insight which is peculiar to its illumination, above all, the process of total abnegation in which the personality undergoes self-annihilation only to find itself through union with God—these, as much as he desired them, are, in their fullest measure, quite beyond More" (Lichtenstein 1962, 14). Lichtenstein seems to have been blinded to More's mysticism by More's anti-enthusiastical rhetoric.

¹⁰⁵ More 1651, 39-40.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Parker 1666, 72-73.

love.”¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, More characterized his own invective, sarcasm, and twisted misrepresentations of Vaughan’s position as innocent applications of the “rod of correction” and chided Vaughan for being upset at the libellous attack.¹⁰⁸ More excused his unseemly manner by claiming that Vaughan’s thoughts were unworthy of a serious philosophical response, and that More only descended to ridicule (and so made a fool of himself) out of compassion for Vaughan, in order that the latter might see his own follies mirrored in More. His fundamental contempt for Vaughan was revealed by his determination to make him a cautionary example to others.¹⁰⁹

More’s hypocrisy and lack of charity were not unrecognized by Vaughan who responded, with some degree of amazement, by saying

Thou doest call me, (who am a Christian), one that is “Simon Magus like, a heated noddle, a Mome, a Mimick, an Ape, a meere Animal, a Snail, a philosophic Hog, a Nip-crust, a pick pocket, a niggard Tom fool with a Devills head, and horns, one that desires to be a Conjur-er, more than a Christian,” All these good and sober Moralities I find in your first part ...: But for all these Abuses you tell me in your *Observations* ..., That you have been very fair with me and though provoked, you will continue in the same Candor.... And dost thou think then in good earnest thou hast been very fair with me? I prethee tell me? what is it to be very foul.”¹¹⁰

More’s attack was defamatory, as was Casaubon’s later effort to show a demonic element in John Dee.¹¹¹ The tone More adopted was in clear contradiction to the sober morality and charity he preached as the mark of the true Christian. John Webster was later led to point out the hypocrisy of Casaubon and other anti-enthusiasts. Webster remarked that the use of “stigmatizing titles” is not only against the Golden Rule, but “even against the rules of good manners and civil education, but that some men think that it is lawful for them to say any thing, and that nothing what they say doth misbe-seeem them.”¹¹² Later in life, Vaughan lamented that not only had More abused and misinterpreted his writings, but

¹⁰⁷ More 1651, 23.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁰⁹ More to Conway, 28 March 1653; Nicolson 1930, 75.

¹¹⁰ Vaughan 1650, 4-5.

¹¹¹ Dee’s influence on Rosicrucianism has been noted by Yates 1972, 41ff.

¹¹² Webster 1677, 12.

with studied Calumnies ... disparage[d] our persons, whom they never saw, and perhaps never will see. They force[d] us to a Bitternesse beyond our own Dispositions, and provoke[d] men to sin, as if they did drive the same Design with the Devill.

Discouraged by having fallen into the same moral tone struck by More, Vaughan vowed "no more" to "hazard my soule by such uncivill Disputes," for "I know I must give an Accompt for every idle word."¹¹³

The ecstatic basis of More's spirituality, his experience of union with nature as an element of union with God, the noetic quality of his mystical ascension, and his use of biological metaphors for the cosmos all suggest that he experienced moments of religious feeling not radically different from Vaughan's. Both experienced nature in ways which were *prima facie* inconsistent with More's meditative mysticism which denies religious value to the passions and restricts the religious meaning of the natural order to providential assistance of humans towards intellectual contemplation. The contest between More and Vaughan was not between rationalism and irrationalism, between rational or mystical religion, or between progressive and regressive programs of natural philosophy, but over the sources and character of the religiously meaningful life and its ultimate context. The interpretations they brought to human experience were the results of a creative activity which assigned values and constructed meanings. The choice to embrace a particular experience as an instance of religious cognition or to cast it in the mold of a delusion was part of the poetic act by which they sought to prefigure—to shape our interpretation and response to—the world and the human body.

These prefigurations could not be accomplished through theoretical discourse alone, but required motion back and forth between various domains of discourse—between poetic rhetoric (seeking to evoke the authors' attitudes in the reader), theoretical descriptions, and (only occasionally) logical analysis and argumentation. In this way the world was displayed as a participative context joining human goals, activities, and psychological states with divine realities. While the multi-faceted nature of their disagreement and the language in which it was expressed resist a simple reduction, clear differences in religious attitudes emerge.

¹¹³ Vaughan 1984, 301.

More valued the contemplative religious life to such an extent that, while he had aesthetic appreciation of nature, he was repelled at the thought of immersion in natural processes. The Neoplatonic categories through which he had prefigured the physical body seem to have affected the quality of his experience. Disgusted at the prospect of "slibber-sauce" involvement with bodily experience, he sought to block the religious concern with natural processes which for Vaughan were a rich source of participation in the life of God. More's physico-psychology of delusion provided a model by which to exhibit the disorderedness of Vaughan's religious preoccupations. But, as it traced the source of disorder to noxious fumes ascending from the bowels to the brain, More's psychological theory was also an emblem of debasement and a symbol of his loathing of religious interests so completely merged with bodily things.

In his *Philosophical Poems* More displayed spiritual values and meanings through a controlled interplay of poetry, exegesis, and metaphysical speculation which described religious realities and evoked attitudes and feelings. In this way he aimed to bring readers to rank feelings and activities and to assign them spiritual vectors according to his own ideals of religious meaning. But within the polemical context of his exchange with Vaughan, More found need of different devices. More attempted initially to draw attention selectively to portions of Vaughan's magical treatises and to exhibit these in a light which would discredit their uses of metaphor and show them to be rooted in unworthy passions. That More increasingly descended into the ridicule, sarcasm, and name-calling which made this exchange so unsavory is symptomatic of the poetic source of their disagreement in which a common stock of metaphors and symbols were used to develop contrasting conceptions of the religiously meaningful life and the realities in which it participates. The content of More's disagreement with Vaughan was expressed less by the development of theory than it was through tropes such as irony and sarcasm through which he sought control over the protocols of discourse about God, nature, and humans. In all these ways More sought to regulate the ways in which the spiritual qualities of human life were interpreted, to determine what objects should be of religious concern, and to govern the form in which religious concern was expressed. The vector of religious concern which passed through nature to God was presented as a

disguise for pride. The sensuality of Vaughan's language was displayed as a symptom of moral weakness, delusion, and a disordered body. Their disagreement was about what cognitive and religious values to assign to types of human experience, and was also a struggle for control of symbols and metaphors and the codes and protocols that should govern their employment.

CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICAL ENTHUSIASM: THE QUAKERS AND RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

5.1. INTRODUCTION

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, More considered the “philosophical enthusiasm” of Vaughan the less dangerous of two kinds. The greater threat was among those “political” enthusiasts who come to “fancy themselves great Princes ... and Deliverers of the people sent from God.”¹ More’s *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656), marked the beginning of his increasing preoccupation with religious radicalism. To understand his concern it is necessary to review the history of the early Quakers and their place among the religious radicals.

During the Interregnum, separatist sects had multiplied rapidly along with a hodge-podge of self-proclaimed prophets and Messiahs. Anabaptists, Grindletonians, Ranters, Levelers, Diggers, Familists, and Quakers called for a variety of religious, political, social, and economic reforms, many of which would still be classified as radical today. The Levelers called for a “practical Christianity” which took action against various forms of oppression, pressing for a radical decentralization of political power through democratic reform of parliament, the law, and local government. The Diggers, led by the visionary Gerrard Winstanley, advocated and briefly practiced a kind of agrarian communism. The Ranters took the antinomian view that all things are pure to the Christian and that sin exists only in the imagination. The Fifth Monarchy Men, who saw prophetic implications in the political upheavals of their day, sought and expected a millennial reign of Christ in a new theocratic government based on the laws of the Old Testament. These radical sects rebelled, not only against the organized religion of their day, but against political and economic oppression. The radicals fiercely challenged the organized clergy and charged that their pretensions to scholarship were merely a tool to make simple reli-

¹ ET 22.

gion inaccessible to the common people, to conceal and enhance their own role as exploiters, and to maintain the power of the ruling class.²

Two sects of religious radicals particularly occupied More's thought, the Quakers and the "Familists" or Family of Love.³ The Family of Love was founded by Henrik Niclaes and seems to have been based upon the teachings of David George. Niclaes was born in Westphalia in 1502. After imprisonment for heresy he traveled to Amsterdam in 1530 where he declared himself a prophet and founded the *Familia Caritatis*. He was alleged to have collaborated with Thomas Münzer in an insurrection at Amsterdam. His books were prohibited by the Council of Trent in 1570 and 1582 and by Papal bull in 1590. At some unknown time Niclaes visited England where he gained a nucleus of followers, but Familism in England seems to have been spread primarily by Christopher Vittels. Niclaes preached that men and women might regain in this life the innocence and freedom from sin of prefallen humanity, that property should be held in common, and that only the spirit of God within the Christian could understand scripture. Familism cultivated anti-clericalism by emphasizing the importance of an itinerant apostolic priesthood.

The perception that Familism was profoundly seditious seems to have been based, at least to some extent, on its apparent pantheism. This led the Puritan divine, John Knewstub, to say that "H.N. turns religion upside down. He buildeth heaven here upon earth; he maketh God man and man God."⁴ A further subversive element was perceived in the Familist use of scripture. Because of the superiority of the Spirit (as the agent of inspiration) over the letter, the historical meanings of scriptures were sacrificed for allegorical interpretations.⁵ Familists were hardly distinguished from the Anabaptists who had received a bad name for their activities in Germany during the sixteenth century. In 1535 a group of Anabaptists

² Manning 1984, 66.

³ The following account of Familism and the general background of the religious radicalism of this period draws variously from Nicolson 1930, 296n; Jones 1932, 123-132; Hill [1972] 1991, 26-27; Burrage [1912] 1967, 1:209-220; McGregor and Reay 1985; Heriot 1933-1936; Hamilton 1981; Martin 1980; and Knox 1950, 117ff., 140ff.

⁴ Knewstub 1579, quoted by Hill [1972] 1991, 27.

⁵ Hamilton 1981, 4.

had taken over the city of Münster. Under the leadership of John of Leyden and other Dutch visionaries the city was declared the "New Jerusalem." While pressed under siege by the armies of the nobles and the Bishop of Münster, the radicals proclaimed community of property and even polygamy. Crushed with great bloodshed, this rebellion left an indelible mark upon the memory of Europeans well into the next century and established associations between violence, social upheaval, and religious separatism which were used to discredit not only the Familists, but all the separatists and radical Protestants of England in the seventeenth century.⁶

In fact, although More devoted much energy to excoriating the Familists, there do not seem to have been any active Familist groups in England by the middle of the seventeenth century.⁷ Nearly all the radical sects were called "Familists" at one time or another, indicating that there was both confusion about the doctrines of these groups and that the term was more pejorative than descriptive.⁸ However, there was a factual basis for the connection between Familism and existing sects of religious radicals. Familist teachings had been absorbed by many of the radical sects, and in 1646 a number of Niclaes' works were newly published in English by Giles Calvart—a notorious sectarian and publisher of unlicensed books. He published the works of Gerrard Winstanley, the founder of the Diggers, one of the most radical of all the sects, and in the 1650's became the chief publisher for the Quakers.⁹ Familism entered into More's concern primarily as he saw Familist or Anabaptist tendencies and origins in Quakerism. Like many others of his day,¹⁰ he saw Quakerism as a revival of Familism.

⁶ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 65 and 71. According to Hamilton, the Family of Love was further regarded as seditious because of its purported similarity to Roman Catholicism: they accepted the possibility that the subject, with the assistance of God, could contribute to his or her own salvation (Hamilton 1981, 4).

⁷ According to Hamilton, as of 1622 there were almost no practicing Familists in England (Hamilton 1981, 135, 140-141). However, Lee finds that, according to a petition presented to James II, that there were about 60 in 1687 (Lee 1931, 48).

⁸ Jones 1932, 123-132.

⁹ Winstanley 1965, 28.

¹⁰ For example, Hallywell 1673.

5.2. RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES AND THE PARTICIPATORY LANGUAGE OF THE QUAKERS

The religion of the early Quakers is obscured by the invective of their opposers and by the absence of systematic theological writings. The early Quakers were often uneducated rural folk whose interest was more in the vitality of religious experience than in carefully constructed theological systems. Their understanding of Christian spirituality was nonetheless informed by and expressed through implicit metaphysical and ontological assumptions which reveal the influence of philosophical discourse. While these theoretical structures were not formally and consciously developed, they were part of a framework used to interpret the religious meaning of human experience.

5.2.1. *Implicit Metaphysical Models*

The primary theoretical models of the Quakers were derived from Neoplatonic conceptions of spiritual causation: emanation, participation, and their alchemical variants.¹¹ This genealogical link to Neoplatonic metaphysics can be traced partly through the spiritual literature which was read by the Quakers (along with others disenchanted with the institutional religion of their day) and partly through the cross-fertilization of alchemy and radical spirituality. Jacob Boehme (whose more famous works began to be published in English translation in 1645) was particularly popular among religious radicals as well as the alchemists;¹² and a significant number of Rosicrucians and "Spagyric" philosophers were also members of radical sects.¹³ Examples of this interaction between radical religion and occultist thought could be multiplied without end, but a few will have to suffice. Judge Hotham, George Fox's protector, wrote a life of Jacob Boehme.¹⁴ John Webster (mentioned previously in his role of Paracelsian physician and educational reformer)

¹¹ This is not to say that the Quakers were uncritical of alchemy. See, for example, Coudert 1976.

¹² Winstanley 1965, 28; Hill [1972] 1991, 176; Reay 1985, 16-17; Lee 1931, 53; Nuttall 1946, 16.

¹³ Thomas 1971, 270-271.

¹⁴ Hill [1972] 1991, 176.

was also deeply sympathetic to and involved with radical religion.¹⁵ John Everard, John Canne, John Winthrop Jr., Charles Hotham, and Israel Tongue are other examples of religious radicals who combined interests in magic and alchemy.¹⁶

Organical imagery, typical of alchemical interpretations of Neoplatonism, can be found in the description of Christ as the “seed” which generates new life in the converted soul.¹⁷ While the most central teaching of the Quakers, that of the “Inner Light,” was influenced by the Puritan doctrine of the Holy Spirit,¹⁸ it also draws upon the metaphysics of light which was central to Neoplatonism as a model of causal relations. The Quakers were not Neoplatonists in any robust sense of the word, either in the thrust of their “mysticism” or in their metaphysical interests. They did however use the language of participation which (as it depicts lower realities as completed, perfected, and filled by higher realities of which they are images) was well-suited for expressing divine immanence. The doctrine of the “Inner Light” emphasized inwardness and participative immediacy in contrast to the mediacy and outwardness stressed in the religious formalism against which the Quakers reacted. The fundamental insight of Quakerism was that a living and spiritual Christianity required more than merely knowing the scriptures, taking part in the sacraments, attending ceremonies of worship, and other outward forms of religiosity. What was required instead was an experience of God which transforms the believer so radically that it can be described as a movement from “death” to “life.” The Inner Light was understood as the Christ, present in every individual, to whom the believer must surrender in order to achieve salvation.

Participatory language describes lower realities as images and shadows of the higher realities from which their being is derived. Certain passages of the Bible contain ambiguities in their description of the believer’s participation in Christ—ambiguities which the Quakers exploited to intensify identification with Christ and his works. For example, Paul writes, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me....”¹⁹ The ambi-

¹⁵ Hill [1972] 1991, 80, 82.

¹⁶ Thomas 1971, 270-271; Hill [1972] 1991, 185.

¹⁷ For example, Barbour 1964, 107.

¹⁸ Barbour 1964, 127-159; Nuttall 1946.

¹⁹ *Galations* 2.20.

guity of passages like this allowed protocols of speech in which the moments of the believer's life were described by reference to the moment's of Christ's life. Such protocols intensified participation to the point where there was nearly an identity between lower and higher realities and, along with the doctrine of the Inner Light, made the inwardness and immediacy of conscious participation in Christ the mark of regeneration. For this reason Quakers rejected the Calvinist interpretation of the Atonement, according to which salvation is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the individual believer. This forensic interpretation of Christ's atoning work was rejected because the Quakers experienced the saving work of Christ, not as a legal fiction absolving them from guilt while leaving their lives unchanged, but as an actual transformation from a condition of sinfulness to one of righteousness. While the reality and importance of Christ's historical work was granted, they felt that stress upon the historical and forensic aspects of religion placed Christ at a distance from the believer. Further, they did not conceive that the outward physical work of atonement could justify the individual who presently had no inward and spiritual experience of Christ. Consequently, the Quakers placed little emphasis upon the historical and forensic aspects of Christ's work and much upon the subjective and humanly experienced aspects of salvation.²⁰

5.2.2. *The Meaning and Use of Biblical Narratives*

The Quakers' use of Biblical narratives again reflects a participative emphasis. These narratives were understood as not merely historical facts, but as types of the religious life in which the believer participates. The stories of the Bible were understood to contain the patterns of God's dealings with humanity. The emphasis upon narrative participation yielded a spiritualized eschatology which combined the psychological moments of conversion with the judgment of nations described in the *Apocalypse*. The Quakers sometimes spoke of the Millennium as the transforming entrance of Christ into the heart of the individual. Likewise they spoke of heaven and hell as spiritual conditions of individual consciences, and of resurrection as deliverance from sin wrought in this life through

²⁰ Underwood 1970, 94-96, 102-103.

the inward work of Christ. The interpretation of religious life as participation in God's judgment of the nations extended an axis of religious concern into social and political life. This use of biblical narratives as participative structures often led to misunderstanding of the teachings of the Friends. For example, the emphasis on judgment and resurrection as moments in spiritual transformation was frequently misrepresented as denying the reality of a final judgment and resurrection.²¹

5.2.3. *Inner Light*

The Quaker doctrine of the "Inner Light" was the basis of a mysticism which differed from that of More or Vaughan. The goal of More's mysticism was to free the soul from the bondage of egocentrism and absorption with matter in order to introversively contemplate intellectual forms contained in deity. For Vaughan the goal was to free the soul from sin, in order to perceive and manipulate the *numena* within objects, bringing nature to greater perfection. The goal of the Quakers was to bring the self to judgment before God and to become a vessel and instrument of the Spirit in its dealings with humanity. The doctrine of the "Inner Light" was both the expression of their most powerful religious experiences and the source of great misunderstanding. The early Quakers were less interested in formulating a clear theology than in bringing individuals to a moral and religious crisis. Seldom careful to develop their thought with an eye towards Trinitarian distinctions or a clear Christology, the "Inner Light" was variously described as the Christ within every person, an impersonal force, the Holy Spirit, or the Father.²² But in every characterization of the "Inner Light," it was distinguished from subjective inclinations of any kind, from mental power or intelligence, and from conscience. Rather the conscience was understood as the instrument of the "Inner Light" which had an absolute character. For this reason it is inaccurate to characterize the Inner Light of the Quakers, as Lichtenstein has,

²¹ Underwood 1970, 98, 100; Reay 1984, 146-7, 152-153.

²² Some Quakers held extremely unorthodox views on the Trinity. Fox, for example, conflated Christ and the Holy Spirit and held that Christ is not distinct from the Father. Edward Grubb held that "God and the Spirit hath no Person, nor cannot truly be distinguished into Persons" (Barbour 1964, 145).

as no more than a source of "immediate fresh subjective revelations."²³

The absolutist conception of the "Inner Light" suggested the possibility of a criterion by which true inspiration could be distinguished from false. Between 1647 and 1657 the Quakers sought such a criterion in a type of congregational meeting which had roots in the societies of Seekers which had formed in the northern counties of England.²⁴ The Seekers were not a sect as such, but those who withdrew from organized religion out of the conviction that its ordinances and rituals were a corruption of the true spiritual church. They gathered, with no preaching or formal services of any kind, in order to seek, as their name suggests, a purer form of spirituality and religious worship. They waited together for divine guidance to resolve their spiritual confusion. Among the early Quakers, similar meetings became opportunities to seek leadership from God, the sign of which would be complete consensus. If there were disagreements about where the "Light" was leading, the group would wait in silence and meditation until accord was reached. If no unity emerged, then action was delayed.²⁵

When a "leading" of the spirit was established it was regarded as infallible, because the Quakers saw themselves as inspired by God to the same degree as the apostles. When challenged on this claim by Richard Baxter, who insisted on a distinction between the present dispensation and that of the early church, James Naylor responded by saying that

thou says the Prophets and Apostles were guided infallibly in the manner and the matter, so that what they writ to the Church was true; but thou hast no such infallibility. I say, if thou had such a Spirit, your pulpits would have more truth, and thy book not so full of lies as it is; ... for the Spirit of God is but one, and who hath it hath an infallible guide in matter and manner, if he keep to it. And he that is not guided by this, hath the spirit of Satan; and I know that so far as any are led by the Spirit, it guides into all truth if it be not erred from.²⁶

²³ Lichtenstein 1962, 79. In the 1670's, as the Quakers evolved towards greater religious tolerance, their understanding of the role and nature of conscience developed beyond the absolutist conception of the early Quakers (Barbour 1964, 240).

²⁴ Other criteria, also related to the objectivity of the Inner Light, were the moral purity of the subject of a "leading of the spirit" and comparisons with biblical conduct (Barbour 1964, 119-121).

²⁵ Jones 1932, 56-57.

²⁶ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 283.

The Quakers felt themselves to participate in events of the same nature and magnitude as those in the New Testament. Inner Light was an apt metaphor for Quaker spirituality, suggesting as it does that which brings things concealed by darkness into visibility for inspection. The “light” was experienced as a supernatural agency bringing selfishness and corruption into sight and as participation in God’s judgment of human sin.

5.3. THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE QUAKERS

The Quakers understood the spiritual life to be conscious participation in the transcendent power and holiness of God as it confronts sin in humanity. This participation was both introversive (as the soul brought itself before the bar of divine judgement and renounced every corruption exposed by the presence of the light within the soul) and social (as the individual became a divine messenger). The spiritual life must pass through definite episodes: conviction of sin, surrender of the soul to God, conscious redemption and deliverance, and becoming a messenger of God to the nations.

The Quaker understanding of redemption and sin would not allow the religious adequacy of merely confessing one’s sins and accepting forgiveness. Instead, an experience of transformation was required, in which the self was entirely liberated from the bondage of sin and the taint of self-will. It is difficult to appreciate the profound psychological despair produced by self-examination before the “Inner Light,” as the individual was brought to consider a pollution so deep and pervasive that no action, thought, or desire could escape it. While the Quakers were unsophisticated in many ways, they were acute psychologists, bringing individuals to an intolerable awareness of loathsome elements interwoven with their most basic self in order to achieve a supernatural rather than human resolution. They warned against every human refuge: repentance, resolutions to a greater religious commitment, even a human trust in the redemptive work of Christ were all counterfeit forms of spirituality—profane reassurances which fell short of complete spiritual transformation.

The “Inner Light” which illuminates the depths of sin in the soul and brings it to judgment was associated with terror as well as love.

The Quakers conceived God's relation to the world as warfare. This is captured vividly in James Naylor's "The Lamb's War."

God ... doth nothing ... but by his Son, the Lamb. ... His appearance in the Lamb ... is to make War with the God of this World, and to plead with his Subjects concerning their revolt from him their Creator ... The Manner of this War is, first ... he gives his Light into their Hearts, even of Men and Women, whereby he lets all see ... what he owns and what he disowns ... that so he may save ... all that are not wilfully disobedient.... They are to War against ... whatever is not of God ... whatever the flesh takes Delight in, and whatever stands in Respect of Persons.... With the Spirit of Judgment and with the Spirit of Burning will he plead with his Enemies; and having kindled the fire, and awakened the Creature, and broken their Peace and Rest in Sin, he waits in Patience to Recover the Creature and slay the Enmity, by suffering all the Rage and Envy ... that ... the Creature can cast upon Him, and he receives it all with Meekness ... returning love for hatred.²⁷

Confronted simultaneously with both unvarnished awareness of their own depravity and of the absolute imperative to enter a life of inner and outer purity, despair was a universal moment in the religious experience of the Quakers.

But the goal was not despair and permanent humiliation but a conscious deliverance from corruption. To facilitate this deliverance the Quakers conscientiously avoided preaching doctrines of imputed righteousness or substitutionary atonement. These were regarded as human notions whereby the seeker might avoid confrontation with the corrupt nature within.²⁸ Even confidence in the dictates of one's own conscience and the sincerity of one's own intentions were regarded as possible refuges from the hard truth of one's condition. The spiritual life was not merely belief in the external acts of Christ, but also conscious participation in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The Quakers claimed to know when this divine work was accomplished. Consider, for example, the words of Isaac Penington:

Some may desire to know what I have at last met with. I answer, I have met with the Seed.... I have met with my God; I have met with my Saviour: and He hath not been present with me without his salvation; but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings.

²⁷ Quoted in Barbour 1964, 94-95. Other striking Quaker testimonials of "convincement of sin" leading to the death of the "carnal nature" can be found in Barbour and Roberts 1973, 156-160, 167-169.

²⁸ Barbour 1964, 106.

I have met with the true knowledge, the knowledge of life, the living knowledge.... I have met with the true peace, the true righteousness, the true holiness, the true rest of soul ... and I ... am capable of no doubt, dispute or reasoning in my mind about them.²⁹

Whatever the grounds, Quakers expressed confident awareness of a moment of resurrection into a new state of freedom from carnal corruption.

5.4. SOCIAL ACTION: BECOMING MESSENGERS AND PROPHETS

The “Inner Light” of the Quakers was not only the light which brings the soul to judgment, but also the light which guides into awareness of new social truths. The God of the Quakers was continuously involved with humanity, leading the Friends with the same degree of immediacy experienced by the primitive church. That the Quakers understood the “Inner Light” to expose and judge social (as well as personal) corruption is reflected in their early writings, which were most often tracts of proclamation containing messages of warning to particular groups about specific social evils.³⁰ It cannot be denied that the Quakers manifested an unprecedented awareness of social wickedness, and their condemnations of slavery, cruelty to the insane, and the oppression of women were unusual for their time.

George Fox recorded a religious experience in his *Journal* which clearly reveals his profound sense of the incongruity between God’s holiness and social corruption:

[T]he Lord opened to me three things relating to those three great professions in the world—law, physic, and divinity (so called). He showed me that the physicians were out of the wisdom of God, by which the creatures were made; and knew not the virtues of the creatures, because they were out of the Word of wisdom, by which they were made. He showed me that the priests were out of the true faith ... which purifies, gives victory and brings people to have access to God.... He showed me also that the lawyers were out of the equity, out of the true justice, and out of the law of God.... And as the Lord opened these things unto me I felt that His power went forth over all, by which all might be reformed if they would receive and bow unto it.³¹

²⁹ Quoted in Barbour 1964, 107.

³⁰ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 27-28.

³¹ Fox [1694] 1963, 97-99.

The holy presence which the Quakers experienced at the root of the transformed self was in sharp contrast to the institutionalized corruption and oppression they observed in their society. This imparted an urgent this-worldliness to their religion. They did not nourish a speculative or contemplative theology, but a practical Christianity—a Christianity of social action.³² By the 1650's the Quakers had become the most active and among the most radical of the sects. By 1700 at least 3,750 titles had been published by the Quakers. Calling for the complete transformation of their society, they were quick to interpret natural disasters and the personal ruin of their enemies as prophetic judgments.³³

The Quakers called for the overthrow of hierarchical social structures, refusing to doff their hats in the presence of "superiors" and adopting the egalitarian "thee" and "thou" in place of formal pronouns. Fox contested those who "have long cumbred the ground," those who

are harlotted from the truth, and such gets the earth under their hands, Commons, Wastes and Forrest, and Fels, and Mores, and Mountaines, and lets it lye wast, and calls themselves Lords of it, and keeps it from the people, when so many are ready to starve and Beg.³⁴

The organized clergy were linked to rulers as tools of oppression, and were blamed for their complicity in institutional control of religion exercised through the universities, where the clergy received access to privilege and power and were trained to cloak religion in false and prideful learning which made it inaccessible to the common people. Because they believed that every true Christian was personally guided by God, and because they emphasized that entrance to the Christian life was through a death of the self (rather than doctrinal belief or participation in religious ceremonies), the Quakers, like other religious radicals, despised the trained ministry. In their view, education at a university could not substitute for leadership of the spirit.

Fox described how as he was walking in a field "the Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ; and I wondered at it, because it was the common belief of the people."³⁵ So the Quak-

³² Hill [1972] 1991, 107-150.

³³ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 27-28.

³⁴ Quoted in Reay 1984, 150-151.

³⁵ Fox [1694] 1963, 74-75.

ers joined their voices with other religious radicals, like John Webster, in calling for the end to the training of ministers at university.³⁶ Clerical claims to special religious insights or authority were regarded as false and sinister pretensions, since every true believer was prophetically inspired.³⁷ The clergy were also instruments of economic oppression through the institution of tithes whereby priests were supported in their "idleness" by the labors of the poor.³⁸ The Quakers demanded the abolition of tithes, a working priesthood, and the replacement of a privileged clergy educated in the universities with a ministry of common people who spoke plainly and had the spiritual power to reach the consciences of even the lowest. These demands were expressed again and again in print and in the strongest terms.³⁹ During the 1650's more than a thousand Quakers were prosecuted for their refusal to pay tithes.⁴⁰ In 1659 Fox called for distributing the old monastic properties and glebes to the poor and for converting churches into alms-houses.⁴¹ The rhetoric and public behavior of the Quakers was made more threatening because the early Quakers had not yet adopted pacifistic tenets and in fact constituted a significant portion of the New Model Army.⁴²

³⁶ Webster [1653] 1970, 84-85, 96-97.

³⁷ Their language often suggested that equal authority was to be granted to both the ordinary Christian's experience of the indwelling Spirit of God and the inspiration of the prophets and early apostles (Barbour 1964, 139). Consequently, Higginson charged the Quakers on four accounts: "1. They hold that the holy scriptures ... are not the word of God, and that there is no written word of God; but they say, using a foolish distinction of their own coining, that they are a declaration of the word only in those that have the faith. 2. They hold their own speakings are a declaration of the word (Christ) in them, thereby making them, though they be for the most part full of impiety and nonsense, to be of equal authority with the holy scriptures. 3. They hold that ... all expounding of scripture is an adding to it.... 4. They teach poor people that whosoever takes a text of scripture and makes a sermon of or from it is a conjurer" (Barbour and Roberts 1973, 67).

³⁸ Barbour has convincingly established the importance of Puritanism, geography and economics in shaping the consciousness of early Quakers. Among the most illuminating aspects of Barbour's treatment is his discussion of how ecclesiastical neglect and exploitation played an important role in the early stages of the movement with the result that tithes became a particularly urgent target for reform (Barbour 1964, 1-32, 72-93). Similarly it has been noted that the stress upon conversion among radical sects had the social function of enabling individuals to escape the corrupting and oppressive influences of social and ecclesiastical institutions (Sommerville 1976, 35-36).

³⁹ Reay 1984, 149-150.

⁴⁰ Reay 1985, 43.

⁴¹ Reay 1984, 151.

⁴² Reay 1985, 98.

In addition to their frequent petitions against tithes, the Quakers launched a subversive campaign against the clergy. According to Higginson, in his *The Irreligion of the Quakers*, the Quakers taught that

the Lord is now coming to teach his people himself alone, that they have an unction and need not that any man should teach them; that all their teachers without, the priests of the world, do deceive them, away with them; that they speak the divination of their own brain, and everyone seeks for gain from his quarter; that they take tithes which are odious in the sight of the Lord; that they teach for lucre and the fleece, and live in pride, covetousness, envy and in great houses; that they sit in the seat of the Scribes and Pharisees, go in long robes, are called of men masters; that they scatter people, and delude them with notions of fleshly wisdom and ways of worship according to their own wills, and not according to the mind of the Lord.... [T]he main subject and design of their speakings is to inveigh against ministers and ordinances, to bring ignorant country people to hate or forsake them, to mind only their light within for teaching, which they tell them is sufficient to salvation.⁴³

Quakers would sometimes arrive early at churches in order to address the congregation before the minister arrived, and attended services with the express purpose of interrupting, challenging, and abusing the resident priests. Typical of such disruptions were the words of a Quaker named Mary Fisher, which were uttered in the middle of a sermon by the priest of the Yorkshire parish of Selby: "Come downe, Come downe, thou painted beast come downe thou art but an hireling & deludest the people with thy lyes."⁴⁴

5.5. THE MEANING OF THE BODY AND THE PASSIONS

The attitude of the Quakers towards the body and the passions was reflected in the well known external behavior for which the sect was named by its detractors—quaking. Higginson, in *The Irreligion of the Quakers*, described this behavior as it commonly occurred in their early meetings.

Though their speakings be a very chaos of words and errors, yet very often while they are speaking, so strange is the effect of them in their unblest followers, that many of them, sometimes, men, but more frequently women and children, fall into quaking fits. The manner of

⁴³ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 72.

⁴⁴ Reay 1985, 43-44.

which is this: those in their assemblies who are taken with these fits fall suddenly down, as it were in a swoon, as though they were surprised with an epilepsy or apoplexy, and lie groveling on the earth, and struggling as it were for life, and sometimes more quietly as though they were departing. While the agony of the fit is upon them their lips quiver, their flesh and joints tremble, their bellies swell as though blown up with wind, they foam at the mouth, and sometimes purge as if they had taken physic. In this fit they continue sometimes an hour or two, sometimes longer, before they come to themselves again, and when it leaves them they roar out horribly with a voice greater than the voice of a man—the noise, those say that have heard it, is a very horrid fearful noise, and greater sometimes than any bull can make.

The speaker, when any of them falls in this fit, will say to the rest ..., "Let them alone, trouble them not, the Spirit is now struggling with flesh, if the Spirit overcomes they will quickly come out of it again, though it is sorrow now, it will be joy in the morning" etc. And when they have said a few words to this effect, they go on with their speaking.⁴⁵

This account captures the strangeness of the Quakers as perceived by outsiders, and though it is given by an opponent, there is no reason to doubt its accuracy, since there are abundant testimonies to similar events by the Quakers themselves.

While we might no longer be inclined to follow Higginson's explanation of this bizarre physical behavior as "diabolical raptures immediately proceeding from the power of Satan," yet we might be tempted to agree with him that these "fits" were physical manifestations of troubled psyches in the grip of "real passions."⁴⁶ But the outward quaking which often attended conversion was understood as a physical symptom of the fear, horror, and terror which are appropriate for a sinful creature brought before a holy and omnipotent deity. Quaking and other such bizarre phenomena had their religious meaning as physical postures which expressed and symbolized intentional stances appropriate to a polluted soul confronted with deity.

Imagination and irrational impulses also had religious meaning for the Quakers. As they "waited upon the Lord" for guidance, any course of action which suggested itself to them was regarded with the utmost seriousness. Not every "leading" of the spirit was tested by a congregational meeting. Individual guidance was also allowed.

⁴⁵ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 73-74.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

The very character of the "death of self" which was a prelude to the religious life of the Quakers made them prone to interpret the sheer irrationality and psychological difficulty of a task as a sign of God's leadership to do it. So it is clear that at least on some occasions subconscious impulses rather than God were what guided the Quakers. The most famous such incident was the response of George Fox to the spires of Lichfield as he left Derby prison.

Then was I commanded by the Lord to pull off my shoes. I stood still, for it was winter; and the Word of the Lord was like a fire in me. So I put off my shoes, and left them with the shepherds.... [A]s soon as I was got within the city, the Word of the Lord came to me again, saying, "Cry, 'Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield!'" So I went up and down the streets, crying with a loud voice, "Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield!" ... As I went thus crying through the streets, there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood.⁴⁷

Troubled by the fact that he had no idea why he had been called to deliver such a message, Fox was later reassured that divine leadership was involved when he learned that Lichfield had been the site at which a thousand Christians had been martyred under Diocletian. The danger of confusing subjective impulses for divine leadership is present in any religion which sees God as personally active in the affairs of humans. But in a few cases Quaker receptivity to subconscious impulses seems to have bordered on insanity.⁴⁸

Although the emphasis upon supra-rational divine leadership did sometimes lead to excess and even insanity, it also empowered the religious imagination. The disruptive social behavior of the Quakers was part of their radical rhetoric, which has been called "not simply a rhetoric of words, but a unified rhetoric of symbolic action."⁴⁹ For example, their refusal to remove their hats in the presence of their social "superiors" was not only intended to show a rejection of worldliness, or to make a statement on behalf of human equality, but to humble the proud.⁵⁰ Bizarre behavior was often the primary tool of this rhetoric. John Gilpin crawled through the streets of Kendal, "thinking that I bore a Crosse upon my neck."

⁴⁷ Fox [1694] 1963, 132-133.

⁴⁸ For examples of such cases see Barbour 1964, 117ff.

⁴⁹ Richard Bauman as quoted in Reay 1985, 44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

George Emmot tore off his gentlemanly garb, dressing himself in plain clothes with a string in place of a hatband, and said that "In this same garb I thought my selfe not worldly, but all spiritual." Richard Sale, a tailor, clothed himself in sackcloth, holding flowers in one hand and weeds in the other, with ashes sprinkled in his hair. Some Quakers went "naked as a sign," testifying in this way to the spiritual nakedness of society and to the nakedness in which all shall stand before God at the final judgment. Solomon Eccles, a musician who burned his instruments and books after his conversion to Quakerism, walked naked through Smithfield with a pan of burning coals upon his head.⁵¹ These activities took place against a background of catastrophe. The plague, the fire of London, civil war, and their own persecutions furnished an apocalyptic atmosphere for the Quakers' denunciations of corruption.

More's strategy of placing the religious radicals in the same category as alchemists, like Vaughan, was not without an historical basis. In the first place, both stressed an inward spirituality which was linked to religious and social reform. They both stressed the religious importance of bringing social, political, and religious institutions into alignment with the eternal and the eternal to the aid of the temporal.⁵² And while the Quakers did not share the alchemical fascination with nature as a redemptive object or assign the same spiritual qualities to natural objects, they did share an interest in understanding natural processes in order to improve the material conditions of human life. Consider this vision which George Fox described in his Journal.

Now I was come up in spirit through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new; and all the creation gave unto me another smell than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, and innocency, and righteousness; being renewed into the image of God by Christ Jesus, to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell. The creation was opened to me; and it was showed me how all things had their names given them according to their nature and virtue. I was at a stand in my mind whether I should practice physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtues of things were so opened to me by the Lord. But I was immediately taken up in spirit to see into another or more steadfast state than Adam's innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus that should nev-

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁵² See, for example, Vaughan's translation of the Rosicrucian Manifestos in Yates 1972, 256.

er fall. And the Lord showed me that such as were faithful to Him, in the power and light of Christ, would come up into that state in which Adam was before he fell; in which the admirable works of the creation, and the virtues thereof, may be known, through the openings of that divine Word of wisdom and power by which they were made.⁵³

Some religious radicals, such as Gerard Winstanley (the agrarian communist and visionary leader of the Diggers whom some have linked to the Quakers) even shared to some degree the alchemical vision of God's redemptive activity extending to all of nature.⁵⁴

Like More, the Quakers emphasized introspective examination of the roots of sin in the soul and the necessity of a death of self-will as a prelude to the deified life. Like More, the Quakers were perfectionists who stressed the absence of sin as a sign that one had truly entered into the new birth. But conversion was for the Quakers an entrance into a life of social action. Quaker spirituality was this-worldly. Participation in deity did not center around intellectual contemplation of metaphysical realities, but around divine action bringing individuals and nations to judgment. As the alchemists understood themselves to be cooperating in God's redemptive activity to extend it to the natural world and the material conditions of life, so the Quakers felt themselves to be cooperators with God in the divine struggle to bring social wickedness to judgment. In the converted soul, passion, imagination, and impulsive behavior were signs of prophetic inspiration and spiritual might in the warfare against satanic forces.

5.6. PUBLIC REACTION TO THE QUAKERS

Public reaction to the Quakers was of course split, but many were appalled, frightened, or disgusted by the strange physical phenomena which accompanied exorcisms, miraculous healings, and "convincements" of sin in the early meetings of the Quakers. The

⁵³ Fox [1694] 1963, 97-99.

⁵⁴ In *The Mysterie of God*, Winstanley associated the power of God experienced in salvation with the redemption of all of nature: "I saw no bondage until God caused me to see that I was dead in sin. I was a stranger to God, though as I thought I was a professor of God. And though I was troubled at the power of darkness in me, I could not deny self until God pulled me out of selfish striving and gave me peace. And as God is pleased thus to deal with me, he made me see that he will become the life and liberty of his whole creation" (Winstanley 1965, 82).

Quakers, who rarely failed to respond to unjust accusations, did not contradict the lurid depictions of what transpired at their meetings.⁵⁵ Of the early years of Quakerism, Richard Baxter wrote that

At first they did use to fall into violent Tremblings and sometimes Vomitings in their meetings, and pretended to be violently acted by the Spirit; but now that is ceased, they only meet, and he that pretendeth to be moved by the Spirit speaketh; and sometimes they say nothing, but sit an hour or more in silence, and then depart.⁵⁶

For a nation already in turmoil, the Quakers, with their stress upon apocalyptic themes and the urgency of radical spiritual transformation, with their strange rhetoric of symbolic action and physical behavior, were a disturbing and disruptive social force.

These social offenses were amplified by the theological carelessness of the early Quakers and their tendency to make what sounded like claims to self-deification. The Quakers always insisted on the supernatural character of the "Inner Light."⁵⁷ Christ was often identified with the Light which is present in the converted and unconverted alike. As William Penn wrote to Anne Conway on 20 October 1675,

our testimony is that all turne their mindes unto the light, and spirit of Jesus within them, for their ye divil has reign'd and there he must be dethron'd by the brightness of the comeing and breath of the mouth of the Lord....⁵⁸

Without developing a systematic theory of the will or of Christ's nature and personality, the Quakers emphasized a surrender to the Light which brought participation in Christ. Quakers, who felt themselves to be wholly possessed by this indwelling Christ, were often careless in drawing a distinction between their own personalities and the personality of Christ. As Fox described his own experience,

when I was brought up into His image in righteousness and holiness, and into the paradise of God He let me see how Adam was made a living soul; and also the stature of Christ, the mystery that had been hid from ages and generations: which things are hard to be uttered, and cannot be borne by many. For of all the sects in Christendom (so called) that I discoursed with, I found none who could bear to be

⁵⁵ Knox 1950, 150-151.

⁵⁶ Baxter 1696, 77.

⁵⁷ Barbour 1964, 140.

⁵⁸ Nicolson 1930, 402.

told that any should come to Adam's perfection,—into that image of God, that righteousness and holiness, that Adam was in before he fell; to be clean and pure, without sin, as he was. Therefore how shall they be able to bear being told that any shall grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, when they cannot bear to hear that any shall come, whilst upon earth, into the same power and spirit that the prophets and apostles were in?⁵⁹

One effect of this emphasis on participation in Christ's nature was that the Quakers spoke in a self-deifying language which subjected them to charges of blasphemy.

Few Quakers expressed themselves as extremely as Thomas Holme (who described himself as "above St. Peter & equall with God") but George Fox himself made little distinction between the believer and the person of Christ. He insisted that "He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are of one, and the Saints are all one in the Father and the Son."⁶⁰ To the orthodox (who brought symbolic interpretations to those scriptures upon which the Quakers based their claims, and who carefully distinguished the substance of God from the substance of creatures) the proclamations of the Quakers were truly alarming. So, according to Richard Sherlock, if the Quakers had "the Spirit of God as they pretend abiding in them *personally* and *essentially*, this blasphemy must necessarily follow, that they are equal with God."⁶¹ And Higginson claimed that

George Fox ... hath avowed himself over and over to be equal with God; being asked by Doctor Marshall, in the presence [of witnesses] ... whether or no he was equal with God, as he had before that time been heard to affirm; his answer was this, "I am equal with God." ... This Fox, in a book entitled *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, endeavours to purge himself of this and other such accursed speeches laid to his charge, but he doth it so woodenly and ambiguously, that if there wanted sufficient witnesses, his own bungling answers would to a rational man declare him guilty.⁶²

The public readily believed such charges of blasphemy because of the prior examples of such Ranters as John Robins, whose followers proclaimed him God the Father, his wife the virgin Mary, and

⁵⁹ Fox [1694] 1963, 101-102.

⁶⁰ Reay 1985, 34.

⁶¹ Quoted in Barbour 1964, 147.

⁶² Barbour and Roberts 1973, 66-67.

his son the infant Jesus.⁶³ The flames of anti-Quaker sentiment were fanned when, in 1656, James Naylor (in a re-enactment of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday) allowed himself to be led into Bristol to symbolize the coming of Christ into the hearts of believers. His followers sang "Holy, holy, holy" as they marched before him. The complex political situation was such that Naylor was charged with blasphemy and made a public example. He was whipped with 310 lashes, branded with a hot iron, and his tongue was pierced. This incident lived in the memory of the nation for many years in confirmation of their fears of Quakerism.

The response to the early Quakers was intense. They were despised by the upper classes for their disrespect of social hierarchy. The clergy hated them because of their continual harassment during church services and their constant petitioning to end the system of tithes. By 1659 the Quakers were increasingly denounced in print and from the pulpit, resulting in growing popular fear and hatred of the Friends, who came to be regarded as complete anarchists. Rumors abounded that the "Quakers would rise" and that they "would kill." Ministers warned that the earlier century's bloodshed in Münster was soon to be repeated in England. People armed themselves in fear of the expected uprising, and persecution of the Quakers steadily increased.⁶⁴ Some have even argued that this fear of the Quakers eventually led to the restoration of Charles Stuart. After the Restoration, the persecution of Quakers reached new levels of intensity. They were arrested and placed under custody and even shot by soldiers during their meetings.⁶⁵ While More's polemics advanced the momentum of anti-enthusiastical sentiment, he was also under the sway of a general reaction in which legitimate fear combined with misunderstanding. He was not deluded about the threat which the Quakers posed to his own social and religious standing as a member of the clergy, nor in his awareness of the magnitude of the social upheaval for which the Quakers were calling. Nor was he misguided in perceiving associations between alchemical mysticism and some spiritual emphases of the Quakers.

⁶³ Thomas 1971, 136. On the Ranters, see Friedman 1987; Mosse 1960, 429-435.

⁶⁴ Reay 1984, 58; Barbour and Robinson 1973, 164.

⁶⁵ Reay 1985, 49ff., 104-106; Barbour and Roberts 1973, 37ff.

5.7. MORE'S CRITICISMS OF THE QUAKERS

While More, like Meric Casaubon, fought enthusiasm by providing naturalistic explanations for claims of privileged religious insight, there were important differences in their emphases. Casaubon was a conservative Aristotelian who extended the category of enthusiasm not only to the religious radicals, but also to those philosophers (such as Plato, Descartes, and Neoplatonists of every stripe) who advocated an epistemology in which knowledge is derived from internal sources. His opposition to every suggestion of mystical illumination was accompanied by indignation that the Quakers and other sects claimed to attain freedom from the bondage of sin and self-will. Casaubon regarded such perfectionist claims as an enthusiastic fiction introduced into Christian thought by Pagan influences mediated through the writings of such mystics as Dionysius.⁶⁶ That More diverges from Casaubon on the marks of enthusiasm is apparent in his praise of Plato, Descartes, and the Neoplatonists, in his perfectionism, and in his doctrine of deformity.

More's goal was to defend true enthusiasm—Christian “deification”—from the enthusiasm produced by natural causes. *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* and *An Explanation of the grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660) were joint contributions

to a rightful and justifiable subduing of so dangerous a distemper, and to the slaying or at least fettering that wild Beast that the Devil himself rides upon, when he warres against the Lamb, whose Throne I have seen shaken with the pushings of this monsters horns for these many years together, though never clearer then now of late. And I dare pronounce with a loud voice aforehand, That if ever Christianity be exterminated, it will be by Enthusiasme. Of so great consequence is it rightly to oppose so deadly an evil.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Spiller 1980, 70-72; Casaubon [1656] 1970, 130, 110-112, 118, 125-130; Crocker 1990a, 138.

⁶⁷ *MG* vi. More defends the scurrilous character of the earlier exchange with Vaughan which was the first sally in his war against the enthusiasts, saying that “where I seem most light and trivial and play the sportful Satyrst against Enthusiastick Philosophy, my design even then was as seasonable, serious and of as grand importance as I could possibly undertake....” Of those who expressed offense at his method, he proclaims that they are themselves “over-subject to the Fanatick disease; yet I did easily bear with their ignorance, deeming it in my silent thoughts in some sort parallel to that of the peevish Hebrew who reproached Moses for slaying of the Egyptian, not knowing that it was a prelude to his delivering of his whole nation from the bondage of Aegypt” (*MG* vi).

Whereas the design of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* was to discover “the Natural causes and imposturous Consequences of Enthusiasm,” the goal of *An Explanation of the grand Mystery of Godliness* was to establish the “Reasonableness and important Usefulness of Christian Religion in the Historical sense thereof, and in reference to the very Person of Christ our Saviour.”⁶⁸ More’s goal in these two works was to show that enthusiasts are, on the one hand, physically and morally diseased and, on the other hand, apostate through their failure to properly emphasize the historic Christ and the forensic features of atonement and salvation.⁶⁹

5.7.1. *The Meaning of Scriptural Narratives*

In his objections to Familism and the Quakers, More showed the influence of anti-Quaker propaganda which commonly complained (as Higginson expressed it in *The Irreligion of the Quakers*) that

I could never see, or hear, or learn, that they speak almost anything of the miserable estate of all men by nature, of Jesus Christ our redeemer, of his two natures, of the reality of his deity and humanity, of his office of mediatorship, especially of his sacerdotal office, of his meritorious death and resurrection, of the satisfaction he hath given to God for us, of his intercession for us, of remission of sins, and justification to life to be obtained through faith in his blood....⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ More also used his studies in prophecy (which were strongly influenced by Joseph Mede) to attack both the Catholics and the religious radicals. More’s interpretations of *Daniel* and *Revelations*, along with other prophetic texts, were developed at great length in parts of *An Explanation of The grand Mystery of Godliness, Or, a True and Faithful Representation of the Everlasting Gospel ...* (1660). More responded to criticisms that he was encouraging the kind of fanaticism which characterized the Fifth Monarchy Men in *A Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity...* (1664), a work devoted primarily to discrediting Roman Catholicism: “if the Protestant Reformation, as in other parts so here in England especially, be the Resurrection of the Witnesses [foretold in the prophetic books], as most certainly it is; it is as certain and assured that Familism and Quakerism are mere Enthusiastick Freaks, in that they reject or despise all those things that are so fully, declaredly and universally attested by this cloud of Witnesses, or rather by these Witnesses ascending up into Heaven in a cloud. The Completion of which Prophecy I conceive fell out most fully and orderly in our English Reformation, where the Ecclesiastick Witness mounted the highest among the Reformed Churches into this Prophetic Heaven” (More 1664, 187). For Mede’s influence on More and other Cambridge Platonists see Roberts 1968, 178, 206ff., 218, 220. On More’s interest in prophecy and its background see Popkin 1990, 106ff.; see also Popkin 1986 and idem 1987.

⁷⁰ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 72.

More took the Quakers, with their strong emphasis upon an internalized Christianity, to deny the historicity of Christ and the forensic foundations of salvation. He accused them of utterly rejecting "the Person of Christ as to his Humane nature, with all his offices assigned to him by his Father." He was alarmed by their interpretation of Scripture which emphasized conscious identification with Christ and participation in Biblical narratives to evoke spiritual transformation. More's central objection was that this detracted from the historicity of the gospel narrative, as these "finely-contrived Allegories of the History of Christ" were used to express "a spiritual or mystical sense of things to be done in us."⁷¹ On More's view, it was profoundly harmful to make of Christ's "Paßion, Resurrection, Ascension, his seßion at the right hand of God, and his coming again to Judgement" a

mere Representation of something to be performed within us, namely his Crucifixion, of our mortifying of the old man, his Resurrection, of our rising to newness of life, his Ascension into Heaven and sitting at the right hand of God, of our entrance into the rule and reign in the Heavenly Being with Christ in the Spirit, and his Returning to Judgement, the judging and governing our natural and earthly man with Righteousness and Equity ...

Reducing the historical narrative of the Gospels to participatory language implied that the work of Christ has "no more force nor efficacy to urge us, or help us on to those Accomplishments they represent then if the History of Christ were a mere Fable."⁷²

It was the Quakers' failure to emphasize the historical basis of Christianity that caused More, in a letter to Elizabeth Foxcraft, to insist that the Quakers were "descended" from the Familists. He found the teachings of them both to be no more than

⁷¹ *MG* xii. In connection with this, More specifically mentions the infamous incident involving James Naylor: "ever and anon this inward voice [of the Devil], and sometimes outward, utters very audibly to them some place or other of Scripture to a ridiculous abuse and prophanation of it; and not that only, but enforces the poor captivated vassal in scorn and contempt of the person of Christ to act some remarkable passages in his story, such as his Death, and Triumph at Jerusalem; the former by James Milner and John Toldervy, the latter by James Naylor, who had his horse led in triumph by two women trudging in dirt at his entering Bristol, with Holy, Holy, and Hosannas sung to him by the Fanatical company that attended him; garments also in some places being strowed in the way. Such wild tricks as these deluded Souls made to play, to sport for those aerial Goblins that drive them and actuate them" (*MG* 112).

⁷² *MG* 252.

an Infidell or Pagan canting in Scripture phrases, and in the outward dresse and terms of our Christian Religion, really undermining the ancient Apostolick truth thereof, and under the pretense of crying up the upright life taking away the necessary prop thereof which is the ancient Apostolick Fayth, without which what pressing and effectuall incitements he can use to make men good I confesse I know not.⁷³

More was concerned that the Quakers had stressed the inward work of Christ in the believer's heart at the expense of the historical work of Christ which makes deliverance from sin possible.

While the Quakers stressed the immediacy of spiritual realities through protocols of speech which allowed shifts between talk of redemptive history and the moments of the individual religious life, in general they did not deny the historical reality and forensic aspects of Christ's work. For example, Fox records in his journal that when he was around twenty years of age he was questioned on the work of Christ by a priest.

This priest, Stephens, asked me why Christ cried out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and why He said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will, but thine, be done"? I told him that at that time the sins of all mankind were upon Him, and their iniquities and transgressions, with which He was wounded; which He was to bear, and to be an offering for, as He was man; but died not as He was God; so, in that He died for all men, tasting death for every man. He was an offering for the sins of the world.⁷⁴

So too Isaac Penington wrote to Richard Roberts,

Thou didst acquaint me, that Timoth Fly ... did charge me with denying Christ's humanity, and also the blood of Christ, ... and that I own no other Christ but what is within men. Sure I am, that [no one] ... did ever hear me deny that Christ, according to the flesh, was born of the Virgin Mary, or that was his blood which was shed without the gates of Jerusalem.... I do greatly value that flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and witness forgiveness of sins and redemption through it.⁷⁵

⁷³ 10 June 1669, Nicolson 1930, 297. In the fifth of the *Divine Dialogues* more links Familism and the Quakers because both lead to anarchy through their stress on internal religion at the expense of external, especially the external mediation of Christ (OO 3:745-747).

⁷⁴ Fox [1694] 1963, 71.

⁷⁵ Barbour and Roberts 1973, 241.

But the Quakers understood this external work of Christ as of no importance unless accompanied by internalized participation in Christ. And so Penington stressed "the living bread and the living water" which "is the soul's food," and insisted that

There is a knowing Christ after the flesh, and there is a knowing him after the Spirit, and a feeding on his Spirit and life; and this doth not destroy his appearing in the flesh or the blessed ends thereof, but confirm and fulfill them.⁷⁶

Similarly, Fox described how, on an occasion when the atoning work of Christ was being discussed, suddenly

I saw, through the immediate opening of the invisible Spirit, the blood of Christ. And I cried out among them, and said, "Do ye not see the blood of Christ? See it in your hearts, to sprinkle your hearts and consciences from dead works, to serve the living God; for I saw it, the blood of the New Covenant, how it came into the heart."

That such talk was alarming to non-Quakers is reflected in Fox's description of the reaction to his proclamation. He says that the others were "startled ... [for they] would have the blood only without them, and not in them."⁷⁷

While More misunderstood the substance of their Christology, it is true that the Quakers, whose emphasis was primarily spiritual rather than doctrinal, took few pains to maintain fine theological distinctions. To a religious thinker like More, who increasingly put a premium upon orthodoxy, such theological carelessness was alarming. On 10 January 1675 [1676], responding to the beginnings of his dear Anne Conway's interest in the Quakers, More complained that the Quakers

stick so much at the externall Mediation of our Savior and would have this Mediation of his performed within onely.... But to make this mediation of Christ in us, is a wonderfull forced thing, and nothing but that blind infidel spirit of Familisme could ever have ventured on it. The Scripture is expresse for the externall mediation of Christ in the Heavens, Rom. 8.34, Hebr. 7.25. But where there is mention of an Intercession in us, that is not spoke of Christ but of the spirit of Christ, Rom. 8.26. The Spirit is their sayd to make Intercession for us with groanings unutterable, that being their attributed to the spiritt, which by its presence and separable operation it works in us, the Spiritt causing a conspiracy of will betwixt himself and us, which ineffable motion

⁷⁶ Ibid., 241.

⁷⁷ Fox [1694] 1963, 90-91.

and desire being as well above our own nature as expressions and in sighs and groans toward God. The Spirit in our behalf dictates these inexpressible desires, which are according to the will of God.... Which very desire is the life and essence of all prayer. But if that be given to the Spirit which He makes us to do it is but an ordinarie metonymie.⁷⁸

In addition to their carelessness in distinguishing between persons and offices of the Trinity, More found that the Quakers did not place sufficient stress on the substantial distinction between creature and creator. He complained of

that Fanatical piece of Magnificency of some Enthusiasts, who would make their Union with God the same with that of Christ's. For then were they God, and that therefore Christ is not: Either of which confounds or destroys our Religion. But if you demand what the Difference is betwixt the Union of Christ and Ours with the Divinity, I have intimated it before. In one the Divinity is *Forma informans*, in the other but *Forma aßistens*: in the one it is as *Lux in Corpore lucido*, in the other as *Lumen in Corpore diaphano*. The Divinity in Christ is as the Light in the Sun; the Divinity in his Members as the Sun-shine in the Aire.⁷⁹

The confusion of the work of Christ with that of the Holy Spirit and carelessness in discriminating the substance of creatures from God were both, under More's interpretation, mere symptoms of a deep irrationality with both moral and physiological roots.

5.7.2. Reason, Moral Psychology, and the Inner Light

The doctrine of the "Inner Light" which was so central to the Quakers was preceded by a similar doctrine among the Puritans which surely influenced it. An Anglican strategy of attack against the Puritan variant of this doctrine was developed by Hooker, who criticized the Puritans for holding that there is an "Inner Light" which is a special illumination of the Holy Spirit through which they discerned truths in scriptures which others reading those same passages did not. This, he argued, was not divine inspiration and private light, but merely zeal for the cause in which a reasoned interpretation of scripture was rejected.⁸⁰ Because of their emphasis

⁷⁸ Nicolson 1930, 418.

⁷⁹ MG 14.

⁸⁰ Harth 1961, 27.

upon a supra-rational "Inner Light," More followed the lines of the Anglican attack, criticizing the Quakers for their "wild Rhetorick" which would "disswade men from the use of their Rational faculties, under pretence of expectation of an higher and more glorious Light." This he characterized as insanity.⁸¹ When the Quakers talked about the Inner Light, More thought they were really appealing to subjective impulses which they would have rule not only over themselves, but over others as well. This, he argued, removed all rational basis from religion so that

it is scarce fit to ask Enthusiasts any questions at all, they under pretence of inspiration, wholly disclaiming the use of Reason, and imperiously dictating their own willful Imaginations to the World for certain and undisputable Revelations: And therefore in this regard there is more hope of the Atheists then of them, who by propounding their Objections put men in a capacity of finding out an Answer: but when men will haughtily and superciliously deny a Truth under the pretence of the Spirit, without rendring a reason, this Ignorance or rather Madness is utterly incurable.⁸²

More feared claims to supra-rational light would lead to authoritarianism and found examples of dictatorial tendencies in the behavior of the Quakers.

In their efforts to bring the soul to judgement the Quakers were aware of the many devices whereby self-will could gain entrance in those things which otherwise might be innocent. Reason itself might be turned to excusing the self from a clear view of its corruption. More found this a "false kind of Resignation" which would "bid adieu to the Rules of Humanity and Reason under the pretence of the exercise of Self-denial." Such pretensions "to a more then ordinary pitch of Religion" opened the way for "the Devil to enter and to possess them Soul and Body." Demonic possession was evident in the Quakers "who under pretence of crucifying the Dictates of Reason and Humanity and every thing they find their Spirit carried to" were led away from adherence to the "tender touches of Spirit, and warrantable suggestions of Reason and Natural Conscience, or the laudable Customes of ... Education," and encouraged "to act merely upon blind impulses, of which no account is to be given." The satanic nature of the Quakers' Inner Light was most apparent in their "enmity ... against the Ministers of the

⁸¹ *ET* 38-39.

⁸² *MG* 221-222.

Gospel.”⁸³ In the civil disturbances by which the Quakers engaged in the practical rhetoric of symbolic actions, More saw only “Pharasaical sownesse,” for “Contest with the Magistrate, affronting the Minister in his publick Function” along with “certain clownish forms of calling Thou for You, and keeping on the Hat when others in civil respect put it off” are “no fruits of the Spirit of God.” Their rejection of ecclesiastical ordinances was evidence, according to More, that the Quakers were inspired by “the flames of Hell;” and he compared the quaking which so often accompanied the religious crisis of the Quakers to the religious rites of pagans.⁸⁴

More advocated a “sober” and “rational” Christianity in which believers could give good reasons for their actions. He advocated “An universal Prudence, whereby a man neither admits nor acts any thing but what is solidly rational at the bottome, and of which he can give a good account.” Only in this way could one “be sure it is the Spirit of God, not the power of Complexion or Nature that rules in him.”⁸⁵ But there were profound ambiguities in More’s version of “rational” Christianity and his stance towards reason.

Through his moral psychology More subordinated reason to virtue (and epistemology to ethics). In a letter to Anne Conway of 2 November 1651, he wrote that “the thirst after knowledge is ever dangerous till the divine life has its birth in a man.” It was only in the regenerated that “inquisitions after knowledge are as safe as sweet.”⁸⁶ More emphasized that participation in God produces virtues which are called “Divine,” less “because they imitate in some things the Holy Attributes of the Eternal Deity,” than

because they are such as are proper to a Creature to whom God communicates his own nature ..., and so becomes *θεανθρωπος* For such a Creature as this (and Christ was such a Creature in the highest manner conceivable) has ... Humility, Charity and Purity.⁸⁷

Deiformity is that state in which the “will of God” becomes “Life and Essence to the Soul of Man; whereby is signified a more through union betwixt the Divine and humane nature, such as in them that are firmly regenerated and radicated in what is good.”⁸⁸

⁸³ *MG* 77.

⁸⁴ *MG* 531-532.

⁸⁵ *ET* 45.

⁸⁶ Nicolson 1930, 54.

⁸⁷ *MG* 52.

⁸⁸ *CC* 87. Lichtenstein, in his very perceptive study of More’s moral psychology, has emphasized the apparent conflict between More’s dual emphasis upon ratio-

More was ever more forgiving of contemplative mystics than of those who linked spirituality with intense emotion. In his later years he criticized his friend John Norris for his

seeming severity towards the *severe Masters*, as you call them, of *Spiritual Mortification*. I confess some passages in them lye fair for your lash. But the high and Hyperbolical expressions of holy and devout men are not to be tryed by the rigid Rules of Logick and Philosophy, but to be interpreted candidly, according to the scope they aym at. Which is a perfect exinanition of our selves, that we may be filled with the sense of God, who worketh all in all, and feelingly acknowledge what ever good is in us to be from him, and so be no more elated for it, than if we had none of it, nor were conscious to our selves we had any such things.⁸⁹

Reason then was not to be trusted when employed by those who do not discipline the passions according to More's norms, but those who shared those norms were not to be brought to judgment at the bar of reason.

On the other hand, More consistently claimed that the moral purity of the deiform soul yielded improved rational capacities:

All Pretenders to Philosophy will indeed be ready to magnifie Reason to the skies, to make it the light of Heaven and the very Oracle of God: but they do not consider that the Oracle of God is not to be heard but in his Holy Temple, that is to say, in a good and holy man, throughly sanctified in Spirit, Soul and body.

Consequently, intellectual success required

the Presence of God, who does ... move all things in some sort or other, but residing in the undefiled Spirit moves it in the most excellent manner, and endues it with that Divine Sagacity ... which is a more inward, compendious, and comprehensive Presensation of Truth, ever antecedaneous to that Reason which in Theories of greatest importance approves it self afterwards, upon the exactest examination, to be most solid and perfect every way.⁹⁰

These superior rational powers were sometimes described as the ability to make sound judgments about evidence.

For example in *De Veris Rationibus sive Fundamentis Certitudinis Fidei in Rebus Religionis Brevis Dissertatio*, first published in 1674, he

nal religion and the simplicity of a faith which is based not in the intellect but in the affections. He has also argued for More's increasing "anti-intellectualism" as he aged (Lichtenstein 1962, 20-21).

⁸⁹ More to Norris, 16 January 1685/6, More 1688, 187.

⁹⁰ CSPW1: "General Preface," viii-ix.

associated faith with “nothing other than ascent or persuasion concerning the truth of something arising from some reason.” He acknowledged the possibility of a faith which is subjectively certain yet objectively false, for “we can be persuaded with certainty and without any fluctuation, although the reasons would be themselves false and thus the thing false, concerning which we are so firmly persuaded.” To introduce norms by which to distinguish true from false faith, More suggested that true faith is based on reasons which would be compelling to anyone who is free from the prejudices introduced by education and upbringing, from peculiarities and abnormalities of temperament, from disordered affections, and so on. The “necessary preparation for the investigation and perception of the true reasons for the certitude of faith is that moral prudence” which he described in his *Enchiridion Ethicum*.⁹¹ There he called moral prudence a “first Primitive Virtue” whereby

the Soul has such Dominion over the Passions properly so called, as well as over all sorts of corporeal Impressions, that the mind can receive no Impediment thereby, in rightly observing, and successfully judging of what is absolutely and simply the best.⁹²

In *A brief Discourse of the true Grounds of the Certainty of Faith in Points of Religion* More compared this state to the health of organs required for unimpeded sensory perception.⁹³ Moral corruption and disordered passions were obstacles to faith because they interfered with rational judgment.⁹⁴

At other times More wrote as though the deified soul’s superior rationality results from contemplating divine ideas and their logical relations. In opposition to an inspiration which, as the Quakers held, is entirely above reason, More, in his preface to the *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, upheld “that Divine Life and Sense that vigorously resides in the Rational Spirit of free and well-meaning Christians.” This true Christian inspiration, he argued, is “no distracter from, but an accomplisher and an enlarger of the humane faculties.” It is “the great mystery of Christianity that we are called to

⁹¹ OT 827.

⁹² EE 98. Earlier he describes this virtue as “an intellectual power of the Soul, by which it over-rules the animal Impressions or bodily Passions; so as in every Action it easily pursues what is absolutely and simply the best” (EE 11).

⁹³ More 1668b, 468, 471.

⁹⁴ Moral purification as a prelude to knowledge is a constant theme among the Cambridge Platonists. See Hutton 1984, 184-187.

partake of," that "perfecting of the Humane nature" of "Intellect, Reason, and Fancie" by "participation of the Divine." For reason, "so far from being any contemptible Principle in Man," is "in some sort" in "God himself." For "the Divine Wisdome" is nothing other than "that steady comprehension of the Ideas of all things, with their mutual respects one to another, congruities and incongruities, dependences and independences" which "do necessarily arise from the natures of the Ideas themselves."⁹⁵ Here, rational religion is based on knowledge of necessary relations between eternal truths, and to be deiform is to be rational in the sense of being something like a good logician.

Other times More added practical wisdom to the deiform soul's rational powers. Reason was called

a Power or Facultie of the Soul, whereby either from her Innate Ideas or Common Notions, or else from the assurance of her own Senses, or upon the Relation or Tradition of another, she unravels a further clew of Knowledge, enlarging her sphere of Intellectual light, by laying open to her self the close connexion and cohesion of the Conceptions she has of things, whereby inferring one thing from another she is able to deduce multifarious Conclusions as well for the pleasure of Speculation as the necessity of Practice.⁹⁶

While these accounts all suggested that rational religion required dependable operations of the reason, More also wrote as though it depended on a spiritual sense which conveyed its own certainty.

This spiritual sense arises from the intersection of the will and intellect and depends on the soul's spiritual orientation which determines its feelings and affections. In an exchange of letters towards the end of his life, More approved the judgement of a young John Norris, who objected to "talking of the will and understanding, as faculties really distinct either from one another, or the Soul her self."⁹⁷ Because the will and intellect are not separable one from the other, the intellectual ability to discern what is best is determined by the will's affections and desires which must be freed from the grip of the "Animal life."⁹⁸

For as the eye, let it ἀτενίξειν [gaze intently] never so much, if it be vitiated in it self, cannot rightly discern the condition of the visible

⁹⁵ CC 2.

⁹⁶ MG 51.

⁹⁷ LPM 181.

⁹⁸ MG 51.

Object it fixes its sight upon; so the mind of man, let him set himself never so diligently to contemplate any Moral or Intelligible Object, if he be made dim by Moral corruptions and impurities, will not be able or free to close with what is best in the Circumstances that lye before her, being held captive by the vices the Party has not yet purified himself from. Wherefore the true ground of our being able and free to chuse what is best, consists rather in the purity of the Soul from vice, than in Advertency and Attention to the Object, while the mind is vitiated and obscured for want of due purification. Which the best Philosophers and Christians have alwaies declared to be requisite to true Illumination.⁹⁹

Consequently, the “Mystical Death or spiritual Annihilation, whereby all self-wishing is destroy’d” is a precondition of both freedom of the will and rationality.¹⁰⁰ This “clearing of our inward Eyesight” is achieved through divine grace assisting a resolute “progress in the way of Mortification and thereby of real Regeneration, whereby the Divine Life and sense will sufficiently at length be awakened to counterpoise and overcome the sway and importunity of the Animal life and sense.”¹⁰¹

In addition to “those reasons by which moral or human certitude is initiated” More recognized a “divine certitude of faith.” This is “based on and corroborated by the spirit of life in the new birth, through illuminated reason” which recognizes spiritual truths not through inference, but through perceptions which operate “tacitly and internally by sense.”¹⁰² This certitude is only felt, and cannot be supported by arguments.¹⁰³ More acknowledged that “it may sound as if we give up our prudent Man to Inspirations and to Enthusiasms,” because not only is wisdom confined to those who have undergone spiritual reformation and purgation, but “it must also needs hence ensue, that whatsoever a Man so purg’d, shall afterwards imagine, must therefore be according to Right Reason, or Right Reason it self, merely because he thinks so.” To answer this difficulty, More examined more closely the notion of “Right Reason” which, at least as concerns morality and religion, “must be some Primitive Good, which is not only most simple, but most excellent, and a true Basis, Norm and Standard, for all the rest.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ *LPM* 183.

¹⁰⁰ *LPM* 188.

¹⁰¹ *LPM* 219.

¹⁰² *OT* 830.

¹⁰³ More 1668b, 484.

¹⁰⁴ *EE* 155.

More identified this "Primitive Good" as intellectual love, for there is "nothing more ravishing, and complacent, nothing more sharp in distinguishing, what in every case is decorous and right, or more quick in executing whatsoever is laudable and just." Since no higher or more simple good can be conceived of, intellectual love "ought in preference to be the Rule and Standard of all the rest; and nothing should pass, or be accounted, for Right Reason" which does not have its source in this.¹⁰⁵ This love (which is called "intellectual" because it is an activity of the intellect and so to be distinguished from passion) has its seat in a special "Boniform Faculty of the Soul" which through inward "Sense and Feeling" operates as "that Rule or Boundary, whereby Reason is examin'd and approves her self." Consequently, external norms are not required, since "this inward Life and Sense points singly at that Idea, which is fram'd ... from the Relish and intrinsick Feeling of the Boniform Faculty within."¹⁰⁶

Since the boniform faculty is innate to humans, More had to explain why it did not engender unanimity. In More's solution, the proper functioning of the boniform faculty is determined by the soul's orientation and whether the soul is in a deifying union with God. The unpurified soul is distracted and hindered from effective union by "Lusts" which "deprive us of the Life and Influence of the Divine Spirit," which "most dismally damp and dead the Power of Faith, and Sense of Religion in the Soul," and which "crucifie and nail the captive Soul to this Earthly Body."¹⁰⁷ The unpurified attain only to the "Image of the Earthly Adam" and not to the "Divine Image" which is the "Soul of ... [the human] Soul, and the Life of ... [the human] Life." More depicts the unregenerated soul as dead or asleep, for

Surely every such man walketh like a vain image or shadow; or like a winking *Noctambulo*, that sees not whither he goes, nor in what plight he is, nor whom he may meet, nor what Eyes are upon his nakedness, nor what sad events may attend his fortuitous motions.... Every wicked man or unregenerate, not yet awak'd into the Image of God, has the eye of his mind closed, as these *Noctambuli*, those of the body....¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *EE* 156.

¹⁰⁶ *EE* 157-158.

¹⁰⁷ *DST* 27-28.

¹⁰⁸ *DST* 229-230.

This somnambulistic imagery conveys the sense in which those who are unconscious of the spiritual life lack genuine freedom born of understanding.¹⁰⁹ A dreamer is captivated by a reality which seems compellingly real and important. But the dreaming is caused by that which is very unlike and disconnected from the content of the dream itself. So, More says of these sleep-walkers, that they

do not walk by sight, but by fortuitous phansie, their whole Life being but a series of dreams, and all the transactions thereof, the execution of the dictates of their imagination impertinently busie in this profound Sleep. For these Phantasms, under whose conduct they are in this condition, and which is their first mover in all their actions, creep upon them by meer chance, as dreams in the Night, suggested by the temper of the external Air, or of their own Blood, or from some other causality; and so one Phantasm or commotion occasions another, and the man, like a Ship at sea whose Pilate is asleep....¹¹⁰

A life governed by lust is directed as a dreamer's is by "fatal or fortuitous" causes and falls short of the freedom of those who attain to the image of God. Unless lust and passion are regulated it is impossible to engage in informed moral or religious discourse because the good cannot be discerned.¹¹¹

The regenerated soul is so radically distinct from the unregenerated that More placed a specific difference between them and said that "We might very easily conceive that this Regeneration is as true and real generation as in visible Nature."¹¹² The chief difference between the sleeping and the awakened or illuminated soul is that, whereas the former is primarily passive, the latter is "self-moving" or "self-active." The unregenerate soul (driven as it is by the fortuitous stimuli of passions and sensations) is compared to "men that are dead drunk" who "may be haled or disposed of where others please." However a soul which is awakened out of "the state of Death" by the "Image of God" which is "the power of Christ in him" has epistemic access to an inward guide "which shews him his way clearly, that he may make a choice." Further, the inward divinity transmits the power "to bear strongly and victoriously against all the assaults of the Body." This power to exercise knowledgeable

¹⁰⁹ Plotinus, as he was influenced by Stoic ethics, made similar claims about the absence of freedom of those who act according to the phantasies excited by the humors of the body. (See Bundy 1927, 305).

¹¹⁰ *DST* 230-231.

¹¹¹ *EE* 154-155.

¹¹² *DST* 159 and 157.

and free control over its own destiny makes the converted soul truly deiform.¹¹³

The regenerated soul is deiform because it attains to the image of God, imitating divine attributes in a finite creatural nature. Such a soul, participating in the divine nature, receives "a kind of communicated Omnipotency," and

as God is Omnipotent in the great Universe, and does curb and keep up the whole Corporeal Creation within the limits of certain Natural Laws, which they cannot pass: So also we are to set bounds and limits to our Bodily Passions, and keep them in constant subjection to the laws of right Reason, or to the Rule of the Spirit of God.

While the human soul cannot attain genuine omniscience, "yet we may become in a manner entirely Intellectual, and thoroughly understand, and as affectionately relish the true interest of our own Souls" and this "in our sphere, is an imitation of the Divine Omniscience." And omnibenevolence finds its finite expression in the deiform soul which becomes "a faithful well-wisher to the happiness and prosperity of every Creature of God."¹¹⁴

More's notion of deiformity was certainly similar to the doctrines of the Quakers. Both made self-will a corrupting influence on the affections and the reason. Nonetheless there were clear and substantial differences between the Quakers and More. This is most apparent when More claimed, as quoted above, that the Quakers must be understood as irrational because they were unable to supply reasons in support of their actions. Under the leadings of the "Inner Light" a Quaker was frequently unable to supply reasons independent of the subjectively felt impulse of an absolute God who is involved in the affairs of humankind. At other times an action might be explained by appealing to moral imperatives, to judgments found in the Bible, or to a divine sense of justice. But the Quakers would never have claimed to ground their actions in a purified reason. Rather they would have viewed their actions as grounded in God's revelation to the individual conscience.

More, on the other hand, assumed that the soul possesses the ability to turn itself away from corruption towards God to find illumination in the regenerated intellect and purified reason.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹³ *DST* 237-238.

¹¹⁴ *DST* 235-237.

¹¹⁵ Crocker has noted this aspect of More's thought and traced the probable

intellect of the regenerated is transformed because the will and affections, with which it is inseparably fused, are purified.¹¹⁶ As Lichtenstein has characterized More's position, "will does not merely initiate thought, but conditions it."¹¹⁷ However, More often emphasized not clarified intellectual vision, but "Divine sensations" which "lye deeper than imaginative Reason and Notion."¹¹⁸ As a result, the deiform individual does not have "Theoretical apprehensions of what is good" but rather experiences a "savoury and affectionate discernment betwixt the evil and the good; betwixt the pure waters that flow from the holy Spirit, and the muddy & tumultuous suggestions of the Flesh."¹¹⁹ In so placing the guiding impulses of the sanctified Christian in a "sensibility ... which is an higher and more effectual Principle then Notional knowledge,"¹²⁰ More situated himself closer than he might like to the Quakers. To the outsider it appears that, for all his talk of a natural but purified human faculty, More's "rational" Christianity fell prey to the same criticism he raised against the Quakers. Namely, it was based "upon blind impulses, of which no account is to be given." More's moral and theological authority were the affections of his own soul and his interpretation of their meaning. More's personal distaste for the intemperate behavior of the Quakers was concealed behind the claim that the boniform faculty of his own deiform soul revealed the satanic character of his theological opponents and did not

at all stick to pour out her Scorn and Derision unto the full upon these garish effects of fanatical Fancy, where Melancholy dictates strange and uncouth dreams, out of a dark hole, like the whispers of the Heathen Oracles.¹²¹

Unless More's moral psychology is adopted along with his understanding of the religious meaning of the passions, More's version of Christianity looks no more rational than the Quakers'.

sources of More's "perfectionist" theology to Robert Gell, a follower of Sebastian Castellio who, ironically, was accused of Familism because of his teaching that the Christian can attain a state of perfect obedience to God (Crocker 1990a, 2, 140).

¹¹⁶ For the origins of this "fusion of will and intellect" in the Neoplatonic mysticism of the early church see Lichtenstein 1962, 92ff.

¹¹⁷ Lichtenstein 1962, 43.

¹¹⁸ *LPM* 188.

¹¹⁹ *CC* 30.

¹²⁰ *LPM* 211.

¹²¹ *CC* 178.

5.8. PHYSIOLOGY, MORAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND INSANITY

More's analysis of enthusiasm helped characterize religious radicalism as a species of lunacy caused by disordered passion, demonic possession, or moral depravity.¹²² The belief that one is supernaturally moved to religious insight is, he said, a "true, but farre worse, dotage, then to fancy a mans self either a Cock or Bull, when it is plain to the sense of all that he is a Man."¹²³ The single difference between enthusiasm and ordinary insanity is that

notwithstanding there is such an enormous lapse of the Phansy and Judgement in some one thing, yet the party should be of sound mind in all other, according to his natural capacities and abilities; which all Physicians acknowledge to be true, and are ready to make good by innumerable Examples.¹²⁴

As a result, the enthusiast's lunacy is such "that it may onely befool the Understanding in some one point, and leave it sound in the rest."¹²⁵ Dismissing religious radicalism as a special kind of mental disorder was made easier, because the disorder need not show itself in non-religious beliefs and attitudes. As a consequence, those who might otherwise have defended their sanity by appealing to uncontested intellectual accomplishments in areas other than religion were merely exhibiting a further symptom of their particular species of lunacy.

More's diagnosis of the physiological basis of enthusiasm was not without precedent and followed the humoral pathology of his day. According to this theory severe melancholy was the result of an excess of bodily heat which affected one of the humors. Usually the relevant humor was identified as black bile, which was thought to rise to the brain either directly or in the form of a vapor. In both cases insanity was produced by impairing the functions of the animal spirits which connected the soul to the body. More's strategy was to link enthusiasm to a recognizable category of melancholy,

¹²² More was not the first to give a medical diagnosis of enthusiasm. For example, Jean Riolan the elder, at the end of the Sixteenth Century, attributed it to the effect of melancholic vapors on the fantasy. Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), labeled the enthusiasm of the Protestant sects a type of psychopathology. Hobbes analyzed private inspiration and enthusiasm in relation to his account of madness (Rosen 1968, 412-415).

¹²³ *ET* 10.

¹²⁴ *ET* 9.

¹²⁵ *ET* 28.

which he did by calling it a type of “windy” or “Hypochondriacal” melancholy in which the “Enthusiasts ... are intoxicated with vapours from the lowest region of their Body.”¹²⁶

As a consequence, the sense of deepened spirituality and religious insight which the enthusiast claimed were degraded to the level of “flatulency:”

The Spirit then that wings the Enthusiast in such a wonderful manner, is nothing else but that Flatulency which is in the Melancholy complexion, and rises out of the Hypochondriacal humor upon some occasional heat.... Which fume mounting into the Head, being first actuated and spirited and somewhat refined by the warmth of the Heart, fills the Mind with variety of Imaginations, and so quickens and enlarges Invention, that it makes the Enthusiast to admiration fluent and eloquent, he being as it were drunk with new wine drawn from that Cellar of his own that lies in the lowest region of his Body.¹²⁷

The fumes so emitted produce a “subtil Uncleaness” and “impurity of the Astral Spirit in which is the seat and Dominion of unruly Imagination.”¹²⁸ This produces a chronic problem for those “in

¹²⁶ ET 28. On “windy” melancholy see Babb [1951] 1965, 27ff. On More’s precedents, particularly Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, see Harth 1961, 105ff. See also the introduction by M. V. DePorte in More [1662] 1966, iv; Jackson 1978; and Rosen 1968.

¹²⁷ ET 12.

¹²⁸ In appealing to the notion of astral spirits or the astral body, More is following Renaissance and Medieval traditions which go back, through a complicated history, to Plato, Aristotle, and other Classical sources. The astral body was thought to be composed of fine lucent matter, and seems to have been introduced as a way to understand the extension of the immaterial soul into the material world. Because its matter is far more subtle than the gross corporeal matter of ordinary bodies, the astral body is more easily actuated by the immaterial soul and thus becomes the soul’s instrument for acting in its body. The astral body is closely akin to medical spirits. The theory of medical spirits was developed to explain various corporeal functions of the soul. In this theory, which was still very much active among natural philosophers of the seventeenth century, vital spirits are thought to be fine matter in the form of a hot vapor which is derived from the blood and the air. Conveyed by the arteries, their function is to distribute vital heat throughout the body. Animal spirits are derived from these vital spirits, but are centered primarily in the ventricles of the brain from which they pass through the nervous system to the sensory organs and muscles. They function as the instrument of the soul in motor activity, sensory perception, appetite, the *sensus communis* and imagination. In contrast to medical spirits, the astral body has a greater role in imagination and phantasy and less in animal functions. As the soul’s vehicle, More, like many others, considered the astral body to survive after death when, freed from the gross body, its greater responsiveness to the impulses of the immaterial soul make it suitable to be the glorified body of the saints. Because the theory of medical spirits combined psychic and physical functions, it was ever on the verge of

whom Mortification has not had its full work, nor refined the Inmost of their natural Complexions” and who are, as a result, “subject to be smitten and overcome by ... Enthusiastick storms.”¹²⁹ The “tumultuous and disorderly commotion” in these spirits can be furthered by the effects of a disordered “Phansy” and “so suffocate the Heart that motion will be in a manner quite extinct, & the party fall down dead.”

Wherefore it is no wonder, the Enthusiast fancying these natural Paroxysms with which he is surprised to be extraordinary Visits of the Deity, and Illapses of the holy Ghost into his Soul, which he cannot but then receive with the highest Veneration imaginable, it is no wonder ... that Fear and Joy and Love should make such a confusion in his Spirits, as to put him into a fit of trembling and quaking. In which case the Fervour of his Spirits and Heat of Imagination may be wrought up to that pitch that it may amount to a perfect Epilepsie; as it often happens in that Sect they call Quakers, who undoubtedly are the most Melancholy Sect that ever was yet in the world.¹³⁰

Only when cured of this condition by mortification would such lunatics be led “to the unshaken Kingdome of Truth, and ... to the immovable Calmness and serene Stilness of the Intellectual World, where the Blasts and Blusters of the Astral Spirit cease, and the Violence of the Phancy perverts not the faithful representations of Eternal Reason.”¹³¹

producing a purely materialistic account of the soul (Walker 1958; Dodd 1963; Henry 1986).

¹²⁹ *MG* 254.

¹³⁰ *ET* 18-19.

¹³¹ *MG* 254. Meric Casaubon is in agreement with More in his view that religious enthusiasm has a basis in physiological disorder. He cites Aristotle, who “compares the effects of Melancholy, from whence he deriveth all kind of Enthusiasm, to the known effects of Wine,” then he advances the claim that susceptibility to enthusiasm is due to a congenital physiological condition combined with the moral defect of spiritual pride and the desire to attain more than ordinary knowledge of things: “Some men come into the world with Cabbalistical Brains; their heads are full of mysteries; they see nothing, they read nothing, but their brain is on work to pick somewhat out of it that is not ordinary, and out of the very ABC that Children are taught, rather than fail, they will fetch all the Secrets of God’s wisdom; tell you how the world was created, how governed, and what will be the end of all things. Reason and Sense that other men go by, they think the acorns that the old world fed upon; fools and children may be content with them but they see things by another Light” (Casaubon 1659, sig. L^v-L^r).

5.9. TRUE ENTHUSIASM AND MELANCHOLY ENTHUSIASM

More's anti-enthusiasm was decidedly elitist. As he railed against the uneducated masses for seeking a deeper spirituality at the expense of those careful theological distinctions which were the stock and trade of the trained clergy, he conformed himself to that very pattern of the priesthood which was of particular offense to the Quakers—the priest who pretends to scholarship in order preserve the hegemony of the priesthood and to maintain the power of the ruling class by making simple religion inaccessible to the common people.¹³² In *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* he wrote that what distinguishes genuine inspiration from enthusiasm is “A belief of those Holy Oracles comprehended in the Old and New Testament, *they being rightly interpreted*.”¹³³ Only the trained theologian sees the dangers of subordinating theological doctrines to spiritual transformation.¹³⁴ There are reasons for thinking that More's anti-enthusiasm was partly motivated by a desire to control the political and social vectors of Quaker spirituality. The thirteenth rule for interpreting scriptures which was included in his *Brief Discourse of the true Grounds of the Certainty of Faith in Points of Religion* asserts that “no Interpretation of Divine Writ that justifies sedition, Rebellion, or Tyranny, can be any Inspiration from God.” While never exhibiting any concern about charges of social injustice raised by the religious radicals, he saw “Sedition and Rebellion” as unambiguously “gross and ponderous species of Injustice against the Magistrate, as Tyranny is also against the People.”¹³⁵ More regarded the restoration of the monarchy as the answer to prayers for the nation's deliverance from the social disruptions caused by the radical reformers, whom he characterized as “demoniacs” who would “pull down Churches.”¹³⁶ And Casaubon said of the radicals that

¹³² Manning 1984, 66.

¹³³ Italics added, *ET* 44.

¹³⁴ More's emphasis upon dogmatic theology in his *Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity*, which (in a letter to Anne Conway on 26 November 1660) he said was “of more consequence than any thing that I have wrote yett” (Nicolson 1992, 500) casts doubt upon the usual characterization of More and the Cambridge Platonists as undogmatic and uninterested in revealed theology (eg., Lichtenstein 1962, viii; Gascoigne 1989, 4, 27).

¹³⁵ More 1668b, 477.

¹³⁶ *MG* xii-xiii, 203-204.

They commonly give good respect unto the *Scriptures* ... because they believe them the Word of God ...; but they reserve unto themselves the Interpretation, and so under the title of *Divine Scripture*, worship what their own phansie prompts, or the devil puts into their heads.¹³⁷

In other words, these enthusiasts refused to subject themselves to the regulative interpretation of scripture offered by the Church. In another passage, Casaubon discussed John Dee's purported "gift of prayer." Evidently Dee and some of the members of the independent sects emphasized the value of extemporaneous prayer in which some individuals exercised eloquence and fervor so stirring as to suggest divine inspiration. Casaubon claimed the credit for bringing to light a certain "mystery of nature" which explained the effects of such fervent prayer. The explanation was that "not only the inward heat of mental conception (where there is any vigor) but also the musick of outward words, is able to occasion" an experience of "inward lightsomeness and excitation, or ... [what has] some resemblance to spiritual sorrow and compunction." Those who experienced this inward change were apt to mistake it for an "argument of the spirit." For this reason, Casaubon thought that extemporaneous prayer was dangerous, and claimed that "set Prayers in general are of more concernment to the settling of Peace in the Commonwealth."¹³⁸ The danger of enthusiasm was its encouragement of individuality and nonconformity which placed individuals beyond the control of the Church.

The desire to exercise control over the enthusiasts placed people like More and Casaubon in a difficult position. They were in danger of undermining the basis of their own religion. This danger arose, in the first place, because their skepticism towards the supernatural basis of enthusiastic religion was *prima facie* at odds with their own apologetic program. In his attacks on enthusiasm and his naturalistic approach to its causes, More seemed to distance himself from superstition and occultism and advance a strategy which would make him a natural ally of those contemporaries who took a stand against witch-hunts by giving naturalistic explanations. As Brann points out, the naturalistic elements of More's treatment of enthusiasm had similarities to arguments by followers of Johann

¹³⁷ Casaubon 1659, sig. L'.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. R'.

Wier (d. 1588) and Reginald Scot (d. 1599) that those accused of witchcraft were to be pitied as victims of melancholia, rather than persecuted as genuine consorts of the Devil.¹³⁹ But More was far from taking such a position. In fact, More and Glanvill saw an essential link between theism and belief in demons and other supernatural phenomena, and devoted enormous efforts to establishing the credibility of stories about witchcraft, satanism, and ghosts. Their goal was to provide evidence of the reality of spirits.¹⁴⁰ The rationale was that “whether there are Witches or not, is not a matter of vain Speculation, or of indifferent Moment; but an Inquiry of very great and weighty Importance” with which “our Religion in its main Doctrines is nearly concerned.” The importance of the subject was further enhanced by the manner in which “Atheism and Infidelity” had advanced into the open to dispute “the distinction of the Soul from the Body, the Being of Spirits, and a Future Life;” and so important are these doctrines that if they are lost, then “all Religion comes to nothing.” The investigation of witches was important, because, if they exist, “it is a sensible proof of Spirits and another Life, an Argument of more direct force than any Speculations, or Abstract reasonings.”¹⁴¹

Casaubon followed his *Treatise concerning Enthusiasm* (in which he provided naturalistic explanations for all manner of enthusiasm, denying it a basis in spiritual reality) with *A True & Faithful Relation of What passed for many Yeers Between Dr. John Dee ... and Some Spirits*, in which he published Dee’s diaries to show that his natural magic involved consort with demons. Casaubon’s purpose was to oppose atheism by providing evidence of the existence of God, demons, and spirits, and to warn those who claim special inspiration that they might become susceptible to demonic possession.¹⁴² He argued that the existence of witches, spirits and apparitions have the strongest evidence,¹⁴³ and that he is

intending not only Dr. Dee’s fidelity in relating what himself believed, but also the reality of those things that he speaks of, according to his relation: his only (but great and dreadful) error being, that he mis-

¹³⁹ See Brann 1980, 112. John Webster also took this line in his *The Displaying of supposed Witchcraft*.

¹⁴⁰ For example, AA 89-95.

¹⁴¹ Glanvill [1689] 1966, 267-268.

¹⁴² Casaubon 1659, sig. A.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, sig. Cʳ.

took false lying spirits for Angels of Light, the Devil of Hell ... for the God of Heaven.¹⁴⁴

He attributed Dee's fall to spiritual pride—the desire for fame as a knower above others of the secrets of nature.¹⁴⁵ He allowed that alchemists and natural magicians had stumbled upon some genuine secrets of nature, but that it was probably through revelations given by demons whose knowledge of nature surpasses that of humans.¹⁴⁶

Anti-enthusiasts gave primarily naturalistic explanations of religious experience but supernatural explanations of demonic possession, witchcraft, and ghosts. This tension, not to say inconsistency, within anti-enthusiasm did not go unnoticed by John Webster. After noting the manner in which Casaubon's *Treatise* used humoral theory as a broad brush to paint any example of religious nonconformity as an instance of melancholy, Webster wrote that Casaubon

had before run in a manner (by labouring to make all that which he called Enthusiasm, to be nothing else but imposture or melancholy and depraved phantasie, arising from natural causes) into the censure of being a Sadducee or Atheist. To wash off which he thought nothing was so prevalent, as to leap into the other end of the balance ... [and] to weigh the other down, by publishing some notorious Piece that might (as he thought) in an high degree manifest the existence of Spirits good and bad, and this he thought would effect it sufficiently, or at least wipe off the former imputation that he had contracted.¹⁴⁷

It is ironic that Webster, who suffered the stigma of enthusiasm because of his advocacy of Paracelsian medicine, alchemy, and natural magic, argued that cases of purported witchcraft should be explained as delusions produced by natural causes.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., sig. M^r.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., sig. Q^r.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., sig. U^v. As Yates has noted, Casaubon's attack on John Dee "ruined [his] ... reputation and deprived him for centuries of the credit for his important scientific work (Yates 1972, 188).

¹⁴⁷ Webster 1677, 4 and 8.

¹⁴⁸ Webster was worried that sinister motives governed Casaubon, Glanvill, and More in their defense of the existence of witches. Knowing the manner in which such charges had been used to defame John Dee, Webster was concerned that charges of demonic magic would be raised against those, who like himself, studied natural magic and the occult arts. In fact, More did accuse Webster of using his arguments against the reality of witches in order to hide his own consort with demons (See Jobe 1981, esp. 348; Coudert 1990, 117ff.)

A deeper tension in anti-enthusiasm was that anyone who reads the Bible can see that the Christian religion was founded by people who were every bit as enthusiastical as the Quakers. More introduced such a divorce between spirituality, and passion and social concern that Christianity threatened to become no more than an ethical code and theoretical commitment, which is completely at odds with the charismatic elements of Christianity in the New Testament. Both More and Casaubon were aware of this danger and attempted to discriminate between "true" enthusiasm and the enthusiasm of those they wished to discredit.

So, for example, in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* More inserted the caveat that

there has not one word all this time been spoken against that true and warrantable Enthusiasm of devout and holy Souls, who are so strangely transported in that vehement Love they bear towards God, and that unexpressible Joy and Peace they find in him.

But, that he not be thought to encourage unseemliness, he added that these "true enthusiasts" are "modest enough and sober in all this." He exempted his beloved pagan Neoplatonists from the sting of his attack, by exonerating "those diviner sort of Philosophers, such as Plato and Plotinus," who experienced "more then ordinary sensible visits of the divine Love and Beauty descending into their enravished Souls." With no clear criterion established except what appealed to More's sense of propriety, he concluded that to "such Enthusiasm as this, which is but the triumph of the Soul of man inebriated, as it were, with the delicious sense of the divine life ..., I must declare my self as much a friend, as I am to the vulgar Enthusiasm a professed enemy."¹⁴⁹

In *Scriptorum Philosophicum* (1679), More included a Latin translation of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* with a number of additional scholia.¹⁵⁰ In one of these he gave stronger emphasis to the claim (made in the final pages of his earlier version) that he did not mean to oppose "true and warrantable Enthusiasm" as long as it issued in no claims of unique religious insight into scripture or of special religious authority. In fact, he said, "they very ill deserve the name of Christians, who so indulge a sort of dry and hungry Rea-

¹⁴⁹ ET 45.

¹⁵⁰ These are translated into English in the fourth edition of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*.

son, as wholly to exclude all manner of Enthusiasm." Further he argued that milder forms of melancholy could assist devotion by imparting a "salutary sadness" which generates religious concern.¹⁵¹ Casaubon, too, although he went so far as to claim that every case of religious ecstasy is no more than "a degree and species of epilepsy," insisted that he was amicable to that "true" and socially acceptable enthusiasm of the genuine Christian.¹⁵² But since only arbitrary distinctions were drawn between manifestations of true and false enthusiasm, attacks on the religious experiences of the radicals effectively undermined the experiential basis of the historic Christianity.

That More found a stumbling block in the emphasis of the Quakers on social action is apparent in his changing attitudes towards them as, under the constant stress of persecution and the lash of anti-enthusiastical rhetoric, they became more quietistic and pacifistic and attempted to control the individuality of their members which had often threatened to erupt into chaos.¹⁵³ More's greater tolerance of the Quakers in his later years was also assisted by the influence of his friends Anne Conway and Francis Mercury van Helmont. More's dogmatism had a poignant result in his relations with Anne Conway.

5.10. MORE AND CONWAY

Anne Conway was perhaps of all people most beloved by More. He tutored her when she was a youth, carried on a long correspondence with her, and spent some of his happiest hours visiting her and her husband at their estate in the country. In 1675, van Helmont, another dear friend of More's who was then visiting Conway at Ragley, began to show an increasing interest in Quakerism.¹⁵⁴ On 29 November 1675 Conway, who was quite familiar with More's opposition to the Quakers, received word that More had conversed with several Quakers in London. She wrote that she was glad of this

¹⁵¹ See the introduction by M. V. DePorte, in More [1662] 1966, v.

¹⁵² Casaubon [1656] 1970, 36 and 95.

¹⁵³ Nuttall 1946, 46.

¹⁵⁴ Nicolson 1930, 383ff., 409. Van Helmont's involvement with the Quakers was never quite as serious as Conway's and seems to have been based on some misunderstanding of their doctrines. See Coudert 1976.

and hoped that it would enable More “to give a better judgment of their principles and practices, then you could doe upon the reports of others, who either through prejudice or ignorance had doubtlessly misrepresented them to you.” She further reported that “reading of their bookes lately had in a great measure freed me from former prejudicate opinions, but their conversation doth much more reconcile me to them.” She assured More that the association of the Quakers with the Familists was based on false information and urged him to give serious consideration to some of the christological speculations of George Keith.¹⁵⁵ Around this time Lord Conway expressed concern about rumors that Anne would soon convert to Quakerism. More wrote to her on 7 December [1675] that he had assured her husband “how little feare there is of your Ladyships turning Quaker, they haveing nothing better to communicate to you then you have already, and that you are not at all in love with their rudeness and clownishnesse.” More then added that he was agreeable to indulging her desire that he have further concourse with the Quakers, and reported a conversation with George Keith which he hoped would “undeceive them, or lead them, as a physicion converses with the sick.”¹⁵⁶ More reaffirmed his conviction of a Familist origin to the Quakers, but said that he was glad to note that they had emerged from their origins “into a greater nearness to the true Apostolick Christianity,” even if they have “hardly come of from all points of Familisme.”¹⁵⁷

On 4 February 1675/1676 (in the midst of a further decline in her consistently poor health) Conway responded with a letter which deserves extensive quotation for the gentle reproof which so perceptively identifies the flaws in More’s character.

... I am of your opinion, that there are many bad people amongst [the Quakers] ..., as well as of other professions, and doe also beleeve, that their converse with you might be of good use to them, for the clearing up of their understanding, and advancing their progresse towards the best things and therefore that your Conversation with them at London might be as you expresse it charitably intended, like that of a Physitian Frequenting his patients for the increase or confirmation of their health, but I must professe that my converse with them is upon a contrary account, to receive health and refreshment from them. They have been and are a suffering people and are taught from

¹⁵⁵ Nicolson 1930, 407-408.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 414-415.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 418.

the consolation [that] has been experimentally felt by them under their great tryals to administer comfort upon occasion to others in great distresse.... The weight of my affliction lies so very heavy upon me, that it is incredible how very seldom I can endure anyone in my chamber, but I find them so still, and very serious, that the company of such of them as I have hitherto seene, will be acceptable to me, as long as I am capable of enjoying any; the particular acquaintance with such living examples of great patience under such sundry heavy exercises, both of bodily sicknesse and other calamitys ... I find begets a more lively fayth and uninterrupted desire of approaching to such a behaviour in like exigencies, then the most learned and Rhetorical discourses of resignation can doe, though such also are good and profitable in their season.... I pray God give us all a clear discerning betweene Melancholy Enthusiasme and true Inspiration that we may not be imposed on to believe a lye. The great difference of opinion in this point amongst the learned and experienced occasions much perplexity in minds less exercised, and so not well fitted for judging.¹⁵⁸

More's interactions with Anne Conway ended as her increasing ill health made her unable to bear company and as her conversion to Quakerism brought between them the history of More's vituperative rhetoric against the Quakers. In the end, her physical and psychological suffering, which caused him much agony, were beyond the reach of the solace he ever sought to give her. His published defenses of Christian orthodoxy, his attempt to provide (in his moral psychology) a theoretical basis for his own religious awakening, and his extensive theological criticisms of heterodoxy were all freely shared with her. She came to find them religiously bankrupt, finding her solace instead in the "enthusiasm" More had spent most of his life attacking.

5.11. CONCLUSION

More's reactions to the Quakers clearly had roots in his personal temperament. His moments of deepest spiritual feeling were also moments of deep retirement. There was struggle in the spiritual life as he displayed it, but chiefly in the inward confrontation with passion and selfishness as it led up to the moment of rebirth and entry into the deiform life. The deiform life itself was displayed as primarily passive. More emphasized rest in God, contemplation of

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 421-422.

spiritual truths, resignation to the material conditions of life, and complacency. The deiform soul was self-satisfied, knowing it could trust the spontaneous judgments of its “boniform faculty” and that intellectual success was assured. More’s temperament naturally contributed to a certain degree of conservatism and a distaste for disturbing social influences.

More was repelled at the uncouth religiosity of the Quakers, contemptuous of their passion, suspicious of their prophetic pronouncements, and afraid of what they might do had they sufficient popular support. The most threatening aspect of Quaker spirituality was its vector of social concern and the particular intensities of a life lived as though participating in the divine judgment of the nation. No spiritual quality was more alien to More than this. But it is not as though his polemics disguised prejudice with a cloak of religious rhetoric. The fears and repulsion he felt took a form supplied by his understanding of a spiritually meaningful life.

More linked alchemical and Quaker spirituality by using psycho-psychology to root them in a common disease. This did much to popularize the link between religious radicalism and occult natural philosophy which persisted into the Restoration. Samuel Parker wrote in 1666 that, while he would like to censure the alchemists, he had “been scared from Engaging with a Rosie-Crucian” ever since he had seen how Rosicrucian thought was presented in the dispute between More and Vaughan. Referring to John Heydon, the self-proclaimed Rosicrucian who was to be imprisoned in 1667 for plotting sedition, Parker wrote that

tis more fitting that these Pedantick cheats were chastised by the Publique Rods, in that they directly Poison men’s minds, and dispose them to the wildest and most Enthusiastick Fanaticisme; for there is so much Affinity between Rosi-Crucianisme and Enthusiasme, that whoever entertains the one, he may upon the same Reason embrace the other; and what Pestilential Influences the Genius of Enthusiasme or opinionative Zeal has upon the Publick Peace, is so evident from Experience, that it needs not be prov’d from Reason.¹⁵⁹

After the Restoration, Sprat famously proclaimed that “seeing we have cast Enthusiasm out of Divinity it self, we shall hardly sure be

¹⁵⁹ Parker 1666, 72-73. While John Heydon does not seem to have been a secretary himself, he wrote numerous works expounding a Rosicrucian vision of a utopian society and was accused of intrigue with George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham (J.R. Jacob 1974, 277-280; Yates 1972, 188-189).

persuaded, to admit it into Philosophy.”¹⁶⁰ As a result there was a conscious effort by the Oxford experimentalists, and later by the Royal Society, to distance themselves from the very alchemical traditions which had fruitfully inspired some of their early work in natural philosophy.¹⁶¹

Further, others followed More in placing the blame for the spread of atheism upon the shoulders of occult philosophers and religious radicals alike. Sprat argued that if

it be a true Observation, That many Modern Naturalists have bin negligent in the Worship of God: yet perhaps they have bin driven on this prophaneness by the late extravagant excesses of Enthusiasm. The infinit pretences to Inspiration and immediat Communion with God, that have abounded in this Age, have carry'd several men of wit so far, as to reject the whole matter [of Religion]; who would not have bin so exorbitant, if the others had kept within more moderat Bounds.... From hence it may be gather'd, That the way to reduce a real and sober sense of Religion, is not by indeavoring to cast a veil of Darkness again over the minds of men; but chiefly by allaying the violence of spiritual madness: and that the one extreme will decreas proportionably to the les'ning of the other.¹⁶²

As the religious radicals led people astray in matters of faith, so Rosicrucianism led them astray through an inadequate understanding of nature and how it was to be investigated, and “this undertaking therefore is wholly cast on the Church of England” which would usher in a new age of rational religion.¹⁶³

More played an important role in establishing a link between enthusiasm and atheism. One of the ways in which he did this was by developing the notion of “mechanical enthusiasm.” More was as confident of the divine character of his own spirituality as he was of the delusiveness of his enemies’. Only a diseased soul could fail to see that spiritual qualities and religious realities were inseparable from mundane facts. Disease was as much to blame in those who denied the spiritual qualities of the world and the existence of a providential order, as in those who disagreed with More about the particular character of providence and the spiritual life. Both were “enthusiasts” in need of instruction, correction, and therapy. Mechanical atheists, as much as alchemists or Quakers, had become

¹⁶⁰ Sprat [1667] 1958, 38.

¹⁶¹ Thomas 1971, 227; Yates 1972, 187-189; Jacob and Jacob 1980, 253-255.

¹⁶² Sprat [1667] 1958, 375-376.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 373-374.

blinded through disease to the true character of the physical world as a stage upon which specific kinds of spiritual meanings were acted out. Atheists ever posed a temptation, because their insistence that sensation alone was cognitively reliable constantly threatened to disorient the pious by directing them to the lower faculties of the soul where it converges with matter. More extended his anti-enthusiastical concerns to mechanical atheists in order that the pious might not lose confidence. In addressing mechanical enthusiasm, More sought to show that the most ordinary features of mundane reality could not be explained without appealing to spirit.

CHAPTER SIX

PNEUMATOLOGY AND MECHANICAL ENTHUSIASM

6.1. INTRODUCTION

According to More, the symptoms of the enthusiastical disease were various forms of spiritual blindness. In Vaughan this blindness took the form of confusion about the cognitive status of the imagination and the passions, bewilderment about the character of providence, and an unwholesome interest in nature as a source of direct religious insight and an arena for religious work. The blindness of the Quakers was evident in their misunderstanding of the nature of Christ and his work in procuring our salvation, their confusion about the character of scriptural narratives, their inability to distinguish impulses originating in the passions from divine leadership, and their prideful refusal to submit to authority.

The Quakers and the spiritual alchemists might seem diametrically opposed to such figures as Hobbes and Spinoza, who were associated then—as they often are now—with materialism and even atheism; but in More's thought they were but diverse branches on a single family tree. As More saw it, these outwardly disparate groups shared a common reliance upon the superficialities of imagination and a common disregard for illuminated rationality. The link between atheism and enthusiasm was exposed in More's *Philosophiae Teutonicae Censura* (1679), More's surprisingly gentle evaluation of Jacob Boehme—a writer who was popular both among the radical religious sects and among the alchemists.¹ While More praised Boehme for his spiritual simplicity,² he suggested that Boehme's unreflective reliance on the imagination posed a threat of atheism. This was apparent in the corporeality which infected Boehme's account of the divine nature, his tendency to identify God with the creatural domain, and his spiritualization of matter.³

¹ In 1645, under the auspices of Giles Randall, numerous works of Boehme began to appear in English translation, followed by translations of Nicholas of Cusa's *The Vision of God* and the *Theologia Germanica* (see Winstanley 1965, 29).

² *OO* 2:532, 536.

³ *OO* 2:538.

As the atheists “claim that the souls of animals and the inferior part of the human soul are corporeal, in this way attributing perception, thought, imagination and memory to matter opening the door to making the spirituality of any essence hardly necessary,” so might Boehme and his followers open that same door further by their failure to properly distinguish God and creatures.⁴

Atheism was linked to enthusiasm through its attitude towards reason. In the edition of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* published in 1662 More remarked that:

Atheism and Enthusiasm, though they seem so extremely opposite one to another, yet in many things they do very nearly agree. For, to say nothing of their joynt conspiracy against the true knowledge of God and Religion, they are commonly entertain'd, though successively, in the same Complexion. For that Temper that disposes a man to listen to the Magisterial Dictates of an over-bearing Phansy, more then to the calm and cautious insinuations of free Reason, is a subject that by turns does very easily lodge and give harbour to these mischievous Guests.

More linked such “naturalists” as Hobbes (who hoped to furnish mechanical explanations for every species of phenomena)⁵ with the multiplication of radical religious sects and the necessity of challenging the enthusiastical tendencies of his time, for

Divine Providence more universally loosening the minds of men from the awe and tyranny of mere accustomary Superstition, and permitting a freer perusal of matters of Religion then in former Ages, the Tempter would take advantage, where he may, to carry men captive out of one dark prison into another, out of Superstition into Atheism it self.⁶

The tendency towards superstition, which threatened to slide down a slippery slope to atheism, was encouraged by the superficial formalism of those who “adhered to Religion in a mere externall way, either for fashion sake, or in a blinde obedience to the Authority of a Church.”

These formalists were “really at the bottome devoid of the true fear and love of God, and destitute of a more free and unpreju-

⁴ *OO* 2:540-541. For a further discussion of More's reaction to Boehme, see Hutton 1990.

⁵ In his *A Treatise concerning Enthusiasme* (1656), Casaubon had listed nine species of enthusiasm which he proposed to discuss. Among these was “Mechanical Enthusiasm” which never received its promised treatment.

⁶ *AA* 9.

dic'd use of their Faculties." The tumult introduced by the spread of radical religion caused "the tottering and falling of what they took for the chief Structure of Religion," with the result that their sinful natures were emboldened to "cast down also the very Object of that Religious Worship after it:"⁷

For the Atheist's pretence to Wit and natural Reason ... makes the Enthusiast secure that Reason is no guide to God: And the Enthusiast's boldly dictating the careless ravings of his own tumultuous Phantasy for undeniable Principles of Divine Knowledge, confirms the Atheist that the whole business of Religion and Notion of a God is nothing but a troublesome fit of over-curious Melancholy.⁸

More's claims about the enthusiastical character of atheism were repeated by Glanvill and Ralph Cudworth.⁹

The complexity of More's opposition to mechanical enthusiasm was reflected in his attitude towards Descartes. As I said earlier, Descartes' influence on More was already apparent in the second edition of the *Philosophical Poems*, and one of More's motivations in entering into the exchange with Vaughan was to defend Descartes. In later years, More became increasingly concerned to criticize Descartes and to caution against the atheistical implications of Cartesianism. As Gabbey has observed, nearly all of the later criticisms of Descartes can already be found in that epistolary exchange which occurred at the beginning of More's career and the end of Descartes'.¹⁰ In a letter to Boyle of 4 December 1671, More asserted that "I have, from my very first letters to Des Cartes, till this last book of mine [*Enchiridion Metaphysicum*], always expressed my opinion, that this mechanical way would not hold in all phaenomena."¹¹

⁷ AA 9.

⁸ ET 1-2.

⁹ Glanvill 1671, 218; idem 1676, 150-151. "[A]ll manner of Atheists whatsoever, and those of them who most of all pretend to Reason and Philosophy, may in some sence be justly stiled also Enthusiasts and Fanaticks. For as much as they are not led ... by any clear Dictates of their Reason or Understanding, but only by ... a certain Blind and Irrational Impetus ... (Cudworth [1678] 1964), 134). For Swift's use of this notion, see Harth 1961, 80ff.

¹⁰ Gabbey 1990, 21ff; idem 1982, 191-193.

¹¹ Nicolson 1992, 518. More also defended his use of Boyle's pneumatological experiments to reach pneumatological conclusions by explaining that he had for a long time been worried about the atheistical implications of Cartesianism (Nicolson 1992, 518-520). (On the tendency to integrate pneumatics and pneumatology see Schaffer 1987; Shapin and Schaffer 1985; Walker 1958; Walker 1984; Henry 1986b; and Henry 1987.) More was not alone in his opposition to Cartesian cosmology. His reservations were shared by Cudworth (Cudworth [1678] 1964, 147-152),

Mechanical explanation might have its place in natural philosophy, but it should not be extended to those phenomena for which More wished to reserve spiritual explanation. Apparently this concern was increasingly voiced in private conversation with friends, because in 1667 Worthington urged upon More the duty of publicly opposing those who were deriving “notions of ill consequence to religion from Descartes’ philosophy.”¹² More took this to heart in the *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* of 1671 and other writings directed against mechanical enthusiasm. His strategy was to strictly delimit mechanical explanation in order to reserve a role for pneumatology.¹³ Before a closer examination of the specific limits he placed upon mechanical causes and the role of pneumatological explanation in natural philosophy, it is perhaps helpful to review some of the history of More’s reactions to Descartes.

6.2. MORE’S ASSESSMENTS OF DESCARTES

More’s poem, *Democritus Platonissans, or, an essay upon the infinity of worlds out of Platonick Principles*, shows familiarity with Descartes, as do the preface and notes published in the second edition of the *Philosophical Poems*.¹⁴ More’s early zeal for Descartes was reflected in numerous passages of his poems, where he rhapsodized about Cartesian cosmology and referred extensively to Descartes’ *Principia Philosophiae*.¹⁵ In fact, More seems to have been instrumental in introducing Descartes to English thinkers. More’s correspondence with Anne Conway provides evidence of his zeal to introduce

Samuel Parker (Parker 1678), Edward Stillingfleet (Stillingfleet 1702, 301-316), John Ray (Ray [1691] 1979, 13-28), and others of the Royal Society.

¹² Worthington 1847-1886, 3:254.

¹³ According to Coudert, More’s pneumatological writings fell into three periods, each characterized by concern with a specific atheistical danger: in the *Antidote against Atheisme* of 1652 More’s target was primarily Hobbes and his naturalistic explanations of spirits and miracles; in the *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* of 1671 More concentrated his attention more fully upon a refutation of Cartesianism and “nullibilism” (the term he coined to characterize the Cartesian doctrine that spirits are unextended and thus nowhere); and between 1677 and 1679 More was particularly concerned with Spinoza’s claims that scripture is not the word of God and that miracles have natural explanations (Coudert 1990, 118-119).

¹⁴ For further discussion of More’s early familiarity with Descartes see Gabbey 1982.

¹⁵ For example, CP 152ff.

his students to Descartes' writings.¹⁶ More seems to have embraced Cartesian natural philosophy to complement theological Platonism.¹⁷ So convinced was he of the importance of Descartes that in the preface to *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659) More suggested that "it is the most sober and faithful advice that can be offered to the Christian World, that they would encourage the reading of Descartes in all publick Schools or Universities."¹⁸ More's zeal apparently encouraged one of his followers, John Hall, to present a pamphlet to Parliament arguing for the incorporation of Descartes and Platonic writers into the university curriculum. The effects of More's advocacy of Cartesianism were reflected in Simon Patrick's famous tract, *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men* (London, 1662) and in the early careers of Henry Power and Isaac Barrow—later a teacher of Newton.¹⁹

In the second edition of the *Philosophical Poems* More's primary reservation seems to have been that Descartes expended too much effort on proving God's existence and not enough on the providential structure of the cosmos, self-mortification, and deification.²⁰ His correspondence with Descartes makes it clear that another major concern was the version of dualism he had constructed. More objected to making extension essential to bodies while denying it to spirits, which would then have no place in the world.²¹ This, as More later wrote, is "an oblique and close derision of their Existence, saying indeed they exist, but then hiddenly and cunningly denying it, by affirming they are nowhere."²² Any existing thing has a place in the world. Angels and souls must then be assigned extension in order to assure that mundane reality is permeated by spiritual influences and meanings. Since God is "omnipresent and inwardly occupies the universal machine of the

¹⁶ Nicolson 1930, 42-43, 46, 51-53, 108, 203-204. See also Nicolson 1929, 356-374; and Webster 1969, 359-361. More's importance to early English Cartesianism has been disputed by S. P. Lamprecht (Lamprecht 1935, 181-242).

¹⁷ More 1651, 41-42.

¹⁸ *IS* 13.

¹⁹ Hall 1649. See Webster 1969, 360-361. For the Cartesian influences on Power, see Webster 1967a, 150-178. For Barrow's Cartesianism see Barrow's oration, "Cartesiana hypothesis de materia et motu haud satisfacit praecipuis naturae phaenomenis" in Isaac Barrow, *Theological Works*, ed. A. Napier, 9 vols. (Cambridge: 1859), IX: 79-104.

²⁰ *CP* 7.

²¹ *AT* 5:240.

²² *TNS* 135.

world and its individual particles" and (on Descartes' own account) impresses motion on matter, even God must be conceived of as extended. How could God move the cosmic machine "unless he closely, as it were, touches the matter of the universe, or at least somehow touches? Certainly he could never do that unless He were present everywhere and occupies individual regions."²³

More's universe was driven by immaterial engines which permeate matter, while matter itself (on Descartes' account as well as More's) was a passive substance incapable of self-motion. And,

since nothing either corporeal or incorporeal can act in another, except through application of its essence, it is necessary to further consider that, whether it is an angel, or demon, or soul or God, who acts in the aforesaid ways on matter, that the essence of anything rides, as it were, on those parts of matter in which it acts, or on some other, which acts in these [particles] themselves through the transmission of motion, so that it therefore is somehow present in the whole of the matter which it governs and modifies.²⁴

To claim that "the power of a mind would be extended, while the mind itself is not extended in any way" is contradictory, for the transmission of an effect from spirit to matter (either by God or finite spirits) requires that spirit be "united to [matter] ... by some real mode, and therefore be extended."²⁵ Because matter is passive, corporeal activity must always be attributed to spiritual causes. It is inconceivable that motion be a corporeal mode which is transferable from one body to another. Rather, every active body is permeated by an extended spirit, such that "there is no transfer of motion" but "from the impulse of one body another body is awakened, as it were, into motion, as a soul is by this or that occasion; and so a body does not so much receive motion, as exercise itself in motion...."²⁶

More posed three extensions, each mapped onto the others. The divisible and mobile extension of physical bodies is impenetrable by other bodies; but it is penetrated by spirits, which have "another

²³ *AT* 5:238-239. On Descartes' account, omnipresence is a result of divine omnipotence: "God, by reason of his power, is everywhere; however, by reason of his essence, God clearly has no relation to place. But power and essence are not distinguished in God...." (Descartes to More, 15 April 1649; *AT* 5: 343). God is everywhere because God acts upon everything, retaining it in existence.

²⁴ *AT* 5:314.

²⁵ *AT* 5:379.

²⁶ *AT* 5:383.

er extension which is also true ... which in angels and the human mind has limits and so also figure, but which is variable ...; and minds, whether our souls or angels can contract and expand themselves ... while remaining the same substance.”²⁷ Finally, there is the extension of God which is “whole everywhere, and his whole essence is present in all places, or spaces and points of spaces.” The divine extension is not divisible because it does not consist of “parts outside of parts,” but God does occupy all places with “no intervals remaining.” This extension is space itself, and so is measurable, but infinite and indivisible.²⁸

More’s ardor for Cartesianism was from the beginning vitiated by pneumatological concerns. More and Descartes both traced activity in the physical world to spiritual causes, and the mechanical philosophy was, by virtue of its mathematical clarity and rigor, useful for understanding the character of certain phenomena. However More was alarmed by several elements of Descartes’ philosophy: his account of the divine presence, the absence of immaterial spirits from the extended world, and the possibility that organical models of natural processes would be supplanted by mechanical. In explaining the behavior of animals by analogy with machines, Descartes had denied that they “really live,” “turning them into marble statues and machines.”²⁹ More believed not only that animals have souls, but that “a near infinite procession” of spirits “is constantly slipping, by a certain fatal impetus, into prepared matter.”³⁰ He believed that the world is within God, is filled with spirits and souls, and is governed by spiritual processes.

6.3. PNEUMATOLOGY AND MECHANICAL ENTHUSIASM

In 1653, four years after his last letter to Descartes and two years after his last polemic against Vaughan, More published *An Antidote Against Atheisme, Or An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man, whether there be not a God*.³¹ To curb the folly of those who

²⁷ AT 5:301.

²⁸ AT 5:305.

²⁹ AT 5: 243. For a translation of those passages of the correspondence related to animals and comments on the exchange, see Cohen 1936.

³⁰ AT 5:310.

³¹ The popularity of this work is reflected in the number of editions it went through. The first edition was followed by a second and enlarged edition in 1655.

threatened to replace the providential order with the mechanical, More intended to appear “in the plain shape of a mere Naturalist” using metaphysical arguments, the phenomena of nature, and case histories of supernatural occurrences to demonstrate the existence of God and created spirits.³² More ushered a phalanx of arguments for God’s existence from such things as the idea of God and the existence of conscience.³³ But, by far, the most strenuously advanced arguments were from the inadequacy of merely mechanical causes to account for natural phenomena. As he later explained, he was not concerned about a “mixt Mechanicall Philosophy” which incorporated both spiritual and corporeal causes, but with that “pure Mechanicall Philosophy” whose advocates supposed that “so much motion in the World as there is, the mere rumblement of y^e matter with this motion will generate all y^e corporeall Phaenomena in y^e world.” It is the latter alone which he opposed as both “false & tending to Atheisme.”³⁴ Although his principal target appears to have been Hobbes,³⁵ the specific mechanical explanations he examined were often taken from Descartes. More had high regard for the genius of Descartes and the thoroughness, exactness, and beauty of his natural philosophy which seemed to him the acme of mechanical science. As late as 1662, More continued to regard Descartes “as a man more truly inspired in the knowledge of Nature then any that have professed themselves so this sixteen hundred years” and worthy of comparison to “Bezaliel and Aholiah, those skilful and cunning workers of the Tabernacle, who ... were filled with the Spirit of God.”³⁶

But the primary utility which More found in Descartes’ natural philosophy (and the reason he recommended its teaching in all the public schools and universities) was that through “the observation how far in every thing the Concatenation of Mechanical causes will reach” the reason was both delighted and led to a

A third edition, further enlarged, was included in *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*. A fourth edition, supplemented and translated into Latin, was included in the *Opera Omnia* of 1679. The Latin additions, mostly in the form of scholia, were translated and added in the second edition of *CSPW* in 1712 (Crocker 1990b, 222).

³² AA 7, 87.

³³ AA 22 and 30.

³⁴ To Henry Hyrne, 21 August 1671; quoted from Gabbey 1990, 14.

³⁵ For further details on the response of More and others to Hobbes, see Mintz 1962.

³⁶ CC 104.

distinct apprehension where they must needs break off, as not being able alone to reach the Effect; which necessarily leads them to a more confirmed discovery of the Principle we contend for, namely the Spirit of Nature, which is the Vicarious power of God upon the Matter, and the first step to the abstrusest Mysteries in Natural Theology.³⁷

By showing that Descartes could not account for basic natural phenomena, such as the spherical shape of the sun, the tilt of the earth's axis, and gravitation, More would demonstrate that pneumatology must enter into a rational explanation of the most mundane facts.³⁸

For it seems exceedingly improbable that so excellent a Wit, the greatest Mathematician in Europe, and of such an eximious Architectonical Genius in Mechanicks as Cartesius, should fail in y^e solutions of so many & so plain & simple Phaenomena as I have proved he has failed in, if y^e presence it self of such Mechanicall solutions were not without foundation or a groundlesse presumption.³⁹

A purely mechanical system depended on the pretension that blind particles in motion could produce a world suited to life and human development.

But this pretension is incompatible with the phenomena. The tilt of the earth's axis, which cannot be explained by pure mechanism, produces the seasons which are commodious to life.⁴⁰ The characteristic way in which the structures of living organisms are suited to their particular modes of life is an effect which exceeds the power of general mechanical laws. Such "blind" causes would be more likely to result in structures less conducive to the maintenance of life than the happy results we see around us. They would be more likely to result in "the Eye on the one side of the head, and the Eare on the other" or the "Eare on the crown of the head, and the Eye in the Forehead," than in having "two Eyes and two Ears, so placed as they are" in the more "safe," "sightly," and "useful" place that reason itself would have chosen.⁴¹

Even if particles governed only by general laws of motion could

³⁷ *IS* 13.

³⁸ *AA* 39, 41, and 43-47.

³⁹ This passage from an unpublished letter to Henry Hyrne of 21 August 1671 is quoted from Gabbey 1990, 31. Gabbey's article, along with Hall 1990a and Hall 1990b, 107-201 should be consulted for a lengthier discussion of More's objections to a mechanistic physics and cosmology.

⁴⁰ *AA* 42.

⁴¹ *AA* 69.

produce simple phenomena, such as meteorological effects, it would be enthusiastical confusion to claim that the complex organized structures found in animals can be explained in the same way.⁴² That would be to confuse the materials used by the artificer with the uses to which they are put. It would be like inferring that “because mere Heat and Cold does soften and harden Wax, and puts it into some shape or other, that therefore this mere Heat and Cold, or Motion and Rest, without any Art and direction, made the Silver Seal too, and graved upon it so curiously some Coat of Arms.”⁴³ Cudworth later offered a similar argument that using general mechanical laws to explain organic structures is like explaining the architecture of a house by appealing to the motions of the hands and instruments of the laborers without any reference to the intelligence which guides them. This, he says, is to affirm “one Contrary to be the Cause of another, as Confusion to be the Cause of Order.”⁴⁴ The beauty and teleological organization of living crea-

⁴² More uses epigenetic theory to argue for the spirit of nature: “It is observed by those that are more attentive watchers of the works of Nature, that the foetus is framed out of some homogeneal liquor or moisture, in which there is no variety of parts of Matter to be contrived into bones and flesh: but as in an Egge for Example, about the third day the Hen has sate on it, in that part where Nature begins to set upon her work of efformation, all is turned into a crystalline liquid substance about her; ... so in all Generations besides it is supposed by them, that Nature does as it were wipe clean the Table-book first, and then pourtray upon it what she pleaseth. And if this be her course, to corrupt the subject Matter into as perfect Privation of Form as she may, that is, to make it as homogeneal as she can, but liquid and pliable to her Art and Skill; it is to me very highly probable, if not necessary, that there should be something besides this fluid Matter that must change it, alter and guide it into that wise contrivance of parts that afterwards we find it. For how should the parts of this liquid Matter ever come into this exquisite Fabrick of themselves? And this may convince any Atheist, that there is a substance besides corporeal Matter...” (AA 68).

⁴³ AA 52-53. More gives many similar examples, some quite colorful: “But because so many Bullets joggled together in a mans hat will settle to such a determinate figure, or because the Frost and the Wind will draw upon doors and glass-windows pretty uncouth streaks like feathers, and other fooleries, which are to no use or purpose, to infer thence, that all the contrivances that are in Nature, even the Frame of the bodies both of Men and Beasts, are from no other Principle but the jumbling together of the Matter, and so because that this doth naturally effect something, that is the Cause of all things, seems to be to be a reasoning in the same Mood and Figure with that wise Market-man, who going down a hill, and carrying his Cheeses under his arms, one of them falling and trundling down the hill very fast, let the other goe after it, appointing them all to meet him at his house at Gotham, not doubting but they beginning so hopefully, would be able to make good the whole journey ...” (AA 47).

⁴⁴ Cudworth [1678] 1964, 669, and 681-682.

tures demand that "all things are by the guidance and determination (let the Matter move as it will) or at least by the allowance and approbation, of a knowing Principle."⁴⁵ More argued that the mechanical philosophy especially faltered in its explanations of biological reproduction because, even if mechanical causes could produce an organic structure, they could never explain its persistence or reproductive capacities.⁴⁶

According to More, we need only "swiftly course over the Valleys and Mountains, sound the depth of the Sea, range the Woods and Forrests," or "dig into the Entrails of the Earth" to see that "there are designs laid even in the lowest and vilest products of Nature that respect Man the highest of all." The anthropocentric structure of the universe is obvious, for "Man being of this nature that he is," clearly "these noble Faculties of his" (which might have withered in an insufficiently supplied universe) find abundant "Materials to excersize them on."⁴⁷ The world is stamped with signatures of a providential design and requires a supreme intelligence as its cause.

This is not to say that mechanical laws do not operate, but that they operate under a providential superintendency which sometimes leaves them unimpeded, while at other times over-rides them, as the end dictates.

As a Mason that makes a wall, sometimes meets with a stone that wants no cutting, and so only approving of it, he places it in his work: and a piece of Timber may happen to be crack'd in the very place where the Carpenter would cleave it, and he need not close it first, that he may cleave it asunder afterwards. Wherefore if the mere Motion of the Matter can doe any rude general thing of good consequence, let it stand as allowable: But we shall find out also those things which do so manifestly savour of Design and Counsel, that we can not naturally withhold our assent, but must say there is a God.⁴⁸

To attribute the causes of natural phenomena to "Chance or some other blind unknowing Original" is to be guilty of a kind of enthusiasm and "sullenly and humorously to assert a thing because we

⁴⁵ AA 48.

⁴⁶ AA 52-53, 69, and 80. For a discussion of the debate over the sufficiency of mechanical explanations of biological reproduction in the seventeenth century, see Fouke 1989. For a survey of the ongoing conflicts between vitalistic and mechanistic approaches to biology see Hein 1968 and idem 1972.

⁴⁷ AA 48-49.

⁴⁸ AA 48.

will assert it, and under pretence of avoiding Superstition, to fall into that which is the only thing that makes Superstition it self hateful or ridiculous, that is, a wilful and groundless adhering to conceits without any support of Reason."⁴⁹ For the universe being such as it is, there must exist, in addition to mechanical causes, another kind of agency more suited to convey the providential influence of God.

6.4. PNEUMATOLOGY AND THE NATURAL ORDER

In *The Antidote against Atheisme* More argued from the explanatory insufficiency of mechanical causes to the existence of God, the Spirit of Nature, individual spirits, and souls. A fuller account of spirit and its modes of influence over matter was provided in *The Immortality of the Soul, So farre forth as it is demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason* (1659).⁵⁰ A fully developed pneumatology was important because of the "stupor and besottedness" of the men of those times who were "so sunk into the dull sense of their Bodies" that they had "lost all belief or conceit that there are any such things as Spirits in the World ... or Souls in themselves to be saved."⁵¹ The notion of spirit had to be protected from ridicule and dismissal by a generation whose faculties had been so corrupted by attention to bodily things that they had lost the power to see that the effects of spirits are everywhere. A "true genuine and consistent Notion of a Spirit, and such as will not beget a misbelief of their existence in such as consider it" would establish the rationality of Christian doctrine. Further, an accurate conception of spirits would not only provide assurances of their existence and the immortality of the human soul, but would make "the grand Mysteries" of Christianity, such as the "Triunity of the Godhead, and the Divinity of Christ fit more easie in our minds."⁵²

⁴⁹ AA 81.

⁵⁰ A second edition, with additions, was included in the *CPSW* (1662) and a Latin translation of the latter by Thomas Standish was included in the *Opera Omnia* (1679) with additional scholia supplied by More. The second edition of the *CPSW* includes an English translation of the Latin. Grua mentions a French translation by Pierre Briot, which Leibniz read in manuscript, as well as a Latin abridgement by Knorr von Rosenroth and published by van Helmont in 1677 under the title of *De anima eiusque facultatibus* (Crocker 1990b, 223, 247; Leibniz 1948, 2:509).

⁵¹ More [1689] 1966, 15.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 8-9.

This project had both a metaphysical and an empirical dimension. Metaphysically it required an account of the essential properties and powers of spirit in general, the classification of spirits into kinds, and the delineation of the various powers and functions of each kind. Empirically the program involved displaying the existence of spirits by experiments in the laboratory (a lately developed interest of More's) and through authenticated testimonies of supernatural encounters. The experimental research was not aimed at knowledge for its own sake, or at improving the material and social conditions of human existence, but at producing phenomena which manifestly exceeded the power of mechanical causes in order to make a place for spirits.⁵³ Testimonial evidence of spirits was produced by collecting reliable stories about ghosts, witches, and other supernatural phenomena. My emphasis here will be upon the metaphysical dimension of More's endeavor.⁵⁴

More denied the possibility of knowing the essence or "bare Substance" of anything.⁵⁵ This conveniently relieved him from the obligation of providing demonstrations of what properties pertain to spirit and body respectively: "For if the naked substance of a Thing be so utterly unconceivable, there can be nothing apprehended there to be a connexion betwixt it and its first Properties."⁵⁶ This led More into an interesting inconsistency, since he often argued that matter essentially lacks those powers which he confined to spirit.⁵⁷ This suggests that the inconceivability of materialism lay

⁵³ This late turn to producing experiments was apparently stimulated by his friendship with Francis Mercury van Helmont (Nicolson 1930, 317-318). More also became interested in demonstrating that the phenomena produced in the pneumatical experiments of the Royal Society could only be explained by an appeal to the operations of spirits. The pneumatical experiments of the Royal Society and their use in pneumatological speculation are discussed in detail in Schaffer 1987. In this outstanding article, Schaffer has characterized pneumatics as part of a research program by the Royal Society which was designed to "produce knowledge of spirit and simultaneously to limit and control that knowledge" as a reaction against the excesses of radical religion (Schaffer 1987, 58). See also Shapin and Schaffer 1985, esp. 207ff. on More's role.

⁵⁴ For an account of the empirical dimension see Coudert 1990; Schaffer 1987; Shapin and Schaffer 1985; Gabbey 1990.

⁵⁵ AA 15-16. This, along with other of More's claims, has led Popkin to attribute "super-scepticism" to More (Popkin 1990, 98-99). However, the dogmatic character of More's thought after the early philosophical poems seems quite opposite to serious scepticism.

⁵⁶ *JS* 19.

⁵⁷ More sometimes emphasizes the hypothetical character of his pneumatology.

not in More's confidence in his philosophical argumentation, but in his conviction that the world has a clear religious meaning rooted simultaneously in the ontological distinctness of spirits and their local presence in the universe of experience. To oppose the reduction of the world to "blind" matter in motion, it was necessary to show the inadequacies of mechanism, to demonstrate that non-corporeal beings and non-mechanical modes of influence are possible, and then to show that the natural order can only be placed within the providential order by means of a coherent and explanatorily adequate pneumatology.

6.4.1. *The Concept of Spirit*

The nature of a spirit is "as conceivable and easy to be defined as the nature of any thing else." The specific properties of "all finite created and subordinate Spirits" are reducible to "Self-penetration, Self-motion, Self-contraction and Dilation, and Indivisibility." To these ("more absolute") properties of spirit can be added relational properties: "the power of Penetrating, Moving, and Altering the Matter." So spirit is distinguishable from body, "whose parts cannot penetrate one another," which "is not Self-moveable," can neither "contract nor dilate it self," and "is divisible and separable one part from another."⁵⁸

Spirits have some properties by mere virtue of their substantiality. These they share with bodies, since "the precise Notion of Substance is the same in both, in which ... is comprised Extension and Activity either connate or communicated."⁵⁹ Extension then is a *sine qua non* of all substances, including God.⁶⁰ This controversially combines two properties which Descartes and many others considered incompatible, namely extension (which is "dilatable" and "contractable" in spirits) and indivisibility. But "the parts of a Spirit can be no more separated, though they be dilated, then you can cut off the Rayes of the Sun by a pair of Scissors made of pellucid Crystall."⁶¹ A spirit's indivisibility arises from the physical impos-

However, while he allows that his account of how the attributes of spirit are exercised in the world is revisable, he insists that these attributes themselves are truly essential and so not subject to revision or refutation (*IS* 7-8).

⁵⁸ AA 15-16.

⁵⁹ *IS* 21.

⁶⁰ For antecedents of this view, see Henry 1979.

⁶¹ AA 16.

sibility of tearing it apart rather than its lack of mathematically divisible extension. For this reason, More often substitutes the term "indiscernibility" for indivisibility.⁶²

Created spirits are of four kinds: (1) λόγοι σπερματικοί or seminal forms, (2) the souls of brutes, (3) human souls, and (4) the souls or spirits of angels.⁶³ Spermatik forms possess vegetative life only, the souls of brutes have the additional perfection of sensation, and human souls have reason added. Angels are a separate kind, not because they possess some additional metaphysical perfection, but because of the greater intensity of their sensitive and rational life. This they owe to the subtlety and responsiveness of the aerial or celestial matter which composes their bodies. They live unchained to sluggish matter as humans will in heaven.⁶⁴

Every substance *qua* substance is characterized by extension, and the visible extension of bodies does not exclude their penetration by spiritual entities and forces. The possibility of two extensions co-existing in the same place is established by considering motion a form of extension or magnitude. A motionless body is only extended geometrically within its superficies. But motion adds a new extension, measurable not geometrically but intensively, according to degrees of velocity. Since this added magnitude or extension has its subject in the body, it occupies that same geometrical magnitude which previously had a zero degree of velocity. This establishes, says More, that "two things may be commensurate to one space at once."⁶⁵

A spirit must be extended, because all really existing beings must occupy some given region of the universe.⁶⁶ They must be penetrable, as well as extended, in order to be mapped onto the physical bodies which they occupy, organize, and control. Since the magnitude of organisms grows as they mature, a spirit's magnitude must

⁶² For example, *IS* 21, 25.

⁶³ More describes a seminal form as "a created Spirit organizing duly-prepared Matter into life and vegetation proper to this or the other kind of Plant." The matter is prepared to receive these "spermatik forms" by the plastic actions of the Spirit of Nature. So plentiful are these "Archei" that, in the *Appendix to the Antidote Against Atheisme* included in *CSPW*, More writes, "But you demand where these Archei were before. To which I answer, can there want room for so small pieces of Spirituality in so vast a compass as the comprehension of the Universe? I shall rather reply, Where were they not?" (*AA* 180).

⁶⁴ *IS* 34-35; see also *TNS* 164.

⁶⁵ *IS* 20.

⁶⁶ *TNS* 178-179.

be able to expand with the body it occupies, making necessary the essential "spissitude" of spirits.

More's fullest account of spissitude is found in his *Easie, True, and Genuine Notion, and consistent Explication of the Nature of a Spirit*.⁶⁷ Spissitude was a "fourth dimension" which allowed something like degrees of density in a spirit's occupation of a place, such that a spirit was able to occupy a greater or lesser region of space with no diminution of its total being.⁶⁸ To illustrate the coherency of such a notion, More considered "a piece of wax stretched out, suppose, to the length of an Ell, and afterwards rolled together into the form of a Globe." Through these modifications the wax loses nothing of its total being or amplitude, since "the diminution of its Longitude is compensated with the augmentation of its Latitude and Profundity." Likewise the amplitude of a spirit's essence (its total being) is not altered by changes in size of the physical region it occupies, because "in a Spirit contracting itself, ... its Longitude, Latitude, and Profundity being lessened, are compensated by Essential Spissitude, which the Spirit acquires by this contraction of itself."⁶⁹

As spirits required extension in order to be a part of the world, so did the immortality, functional unity, and ontological superiority of spirit require that it have a kind of indivisibility. Here More faced the challenge of showing that there is no contradiction between the kind of unity which is metaphysically required of spiritual substances and extension in space. He approached this problem by considering the intersection of a globe and a plane. Since the globe (when rolled over the surface of a plane) describes a line, and since a mathematical point (lacking all magnitude) cannot generate a magnitude of any kind, the intersection of the stationary sphere and the plane must be considered to be a minimal magnitude rather than a mathematical point—a magnitude so small "that it cannot be conceived to be discernible into leß." With this argument More claimed to have "found a possibility for the Notion of the Center of a Spirit, which is not a Mathematical point, but

⁶⁷ This English translation of *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* (1671), chapters 27 & 28 was included in Joseph Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus* from 1681 onwards.

⁶⁸ The spissitude of spirits pertains not only to the degree of occupation of a given region of space by an individual spirit but also to the number of spirits occupying the same region.

⁶⁹ TNS 169-170.

substance, in Magnitude so little, that it is Indiscernible.”⁷⁰ However, More had yet to explain how spirits occupy and activate the whole of their respective bodies. For that More returned again to the Neoplatonic metaphysics which so deeply influenced his *Philosophical Poems* in order to develop emanation as a model of spiritual causation.

6.4.2. *Emanation and the Vital Union of Spirits with Matter*

In *The Immortality of the Soul* More defined an emanative cause as that which “merely by Being, no other activity or causality interposed, produces an effect.” The “Emanative Effect” which is produced in this way is “coexistent with the very Substance” which causes it, because

that very Substance which is said to be the Cause, is the adequate and immediate Cause, and wants nothing to be adjoined to its bare essence for the production of the Effect; and by the same reason the Effect is at any time, it must be at all times, or so long as that Substance does exist.

In other words emanative causes operate without the need for volition or intervening mechanisms. An emanative cause brings entities of less reality than itself into existence and imposes upon them complete ontological dependency. Causes of this kind must exist, because the necessity of avoiding an infinite regression leads to some such self-moving being as first cause.⁷¹

More drew on Neoplatonic cosmogony (in which lower levels of reality unfold from the higher levels of being in which they participate) to explain the manner in which souls, which exist in minimal magnitudes, expand themselves to occupy an entire body. He found “no contradiction or impossibility” in the notion that one created substance might bring another into being, providing that what is produced is ontologically inferior to its cause. It is coherent then that the soul or spirit, as a “primary” substance, emanates that which is ontologically inferior and, though “in some sense” a

⁷⁰ IS 26-27. More’s mathematical analysis can, of course, be faulted. But since he needs only to demonstrate the conceivability of an indivisible center which can be mapped onto an extended figure, he might (had he known of it) made appeal to the projective geometry developed by Desargues and Pascal. (See, for example, Taton 1955). This projective geometry would have been extremely congenial to More’s analogy between the soul and light (see below).

⁷¹ IS 27-28.

substance, "but secondary or Emanatory." That "part of a Spirit which we call the Secondary Substance" is a "Subject indued with certain powers and activities" which is "referrable ... to the Primary or Centrall Substance by way of causall relation" and its extension arises "by graduall Emanation from the first and Primest Essence, which we call the Centre of the Spirit."⁷² More concluded that a spirit, which is centrally located in a minimal magnitude, has "virtue so great, that it can send out of it self so large a Sphere of secondary Substance ... that it is able to actuate grand Proportions of Matter, this whole Sphere of life and activity being in the mean time utterly Indiscernible."⁷³

More illustrated the nature of this indiscernible extension of spirit by drawing on the traditional Neoplatonic analogy between light and emanative causation. He asked the reader to imagine a "luminous Orb" generated by light which irradiates from a single point. More observed that this "Orb of light does very much resemble the nature of a Spirit, which is diffus'd and extended, and yet indivisible." The orb, More argued, "according to the known principles of Opticks," cannot be separated from its originating source. Further, if the radiations from the point "are hindered from shooting out so far as they would" they "need not loose their virtue or Being, but onely be reflected back to the shining Centre; and the obstacle being removed, they may shoot out to their full length again; so that there is no generation of a new ray, but an emission of what was actually before." In this way, the orb of light resembles the soul, which may "dilate" and "contract" itself to occupy more or less space and yet never lose any of its being. And the fact that a created nature, such as a point of light, is capable of generating such an "Efflux of the secondary Substance" shows that emanative causation is not "Creation properly so called, which is deemed incompetent to any creature."⁷⁴

More contrasted this conception of soul and spirit with the competing accounts given by the "Nullibilists and Hohenmerians." The Nullibilists were those who, following Descartes, would have spirits be "where there actions are" without granting them the attribute

⁷² *IS* 28-29.

⁷³ *IS* 27-28.

⁷⁴ *AA* 150-151.

of extension whereby they might actually occupy a portion of the world.⁷⁵ The Holenmerians, on the other hand,

acknowledge that Spirits are somewhere; but add further that they are not only entirely or totally in their whole *Ubi* or place ... but are totally in every part or point thereof, and describe the peculiar nature of a Spirit to be such, that it must be *Totus in toto & totus in qualibet sui parte* [the whole in the whole and the whole in each of its parts].⁷⁶

More's hypothesis that a soul occupies its "whole Body by an Essential or Metaphysical Extension" was superior to its competitors, because the latter "do intangle and involve the Doctrine of Incorporal Beings with greater Difficulties and Repugnancies" when they try to explain "how the Mind of Man, or any other Spirit, performs those Functions of Perception and of Moving of Bodies."⁷⁷

A central point of More's pneumatology was that matter functions as the instrument, expression or vehicle of spirit: "the motive and unitive power ... [is] immediately and originally in Spirit, but the moveable and unitable in matter."⁷⁸ More argued that, because of the inertness of Matter, "self-active" spirits are not only extended but extended within bodies which they both penetrate and actuate.⁷⁹ One of More's arguments, found in the *Appendix to the Antidote Against Atheisme*, was based on the inadequacy of Descartes' theory of cohesion.⁸⁰ According to this argument, the cohesion of bodies could only be produced by one of two causes: either by the actions of some immaterial being such as a substantial form or, as Descartes would have it, by the mutual rest of contiguous parts of matter. But the Cartesian solution is unsatisfactory, because it allows the counter-intuitive inference that a cube is in cohesive union with the top of a table upon which it is laid. The only possible cause of cohesion is then the influence of an immaterial entity upon matter.⁸¹

⁷⁵ TNS 133-134, 136-137.

⁷⁶ TNS 134.

⁷⁷ TNS 159.

⁷⁸ DST 145-148. A logical consequence of this view, which More accepts, is that no created spirits, even angels, are entirely disembodied. If they were, they would be incapable of knowledge of and involvement with the natural world (IS 6).

⁷⁹ IS 31.

⁸⁰ For More, as for Leibniz, one of the central difficulties of any purely physical hypothesis was that it left unresolved how atoms are held together (DST, 149).

⁸¹ AA 152. The fact that More uses such a basic physical phenomena as the cohesion of bodies to establish spiritual influences shows that at least by the time of the

More argued further that imagination, reasoning, and memory cannot be explained mechanically, and so must result from the soul's operations on matter. For example "free Phansy and active Reason" (which More linked to the motion of animal spirits) could not be under the direction of the physical brain, because it has a "spongy and porous" texture which "lies like a Net all on heaps in the water." Even if the brain were considered to produce thought by being "figured into this or that representation," each new figure would immediately destroy the old to eliminate the possibility of memory. Further, the inter-coordinated manner in which the various bodily functions are controlled by the direction of animal spirits is beyond the power of such a "liquid body" as the brain. Even if it were assumed that "in every Part of the Brain" there is a "power of Animadversion and Phansy" it would be impossible to explain, in mere physical terms, the coordination of all these diversely situated centers of control and how they result in a single perceptual orientation within the subject. More found preposterous Descartes' theory that a "little sprunt piece of the Brain which they call the Conarion" is a "substance whose natural faculty it is to move its self, and by its motions and nods to determinate the course of the Spirits into this or that part of the Body"—a theory "no less foolish and fabulous then the story of him that could change the wind as he pleased, by setting his cap on this or that side of his head." For the Conarion is no more than "a poor silly contemptible Knob or Protuberancey, consisting of a thin Membrane containing a little pulpous Matter, but of the same nature with the rest of the Brain."⁸² Consequently the control over the body exercised by means of animal spirits (those extremely subtle material particles) must be attributed to the immaterial soul.

There still remained the difficulty of understanding *how* the immaterial soul influences the matter it penetrates. Here, More said, we are hindered by a "Sophism of the Phansy," namely a misconception which results from using physical objects as a model for spiritual interactions with matter. By letting the imagination dominate their understanding of spiritual natures, many are led to conceive "a Spirit as a Body going through some perious hole or pas-

CSPW More allows almost no purely mechanical phenomena and holds to a primarily vitalistic conception of the world.

⁸² AA 34-35.

sage too wide and patent for it, in which it cannot stick or be firmly settled." In contrast, More believed that "though Spirits do penetrate Bodies, yet they are not such thin and lank things that they must of necessity run through them, or be unable to take hold of them, or be united with them." Through their ability to fully penetrate physical objects, which are then "satiated or fill'd" with spirit, spirits are more intimately united to bodies than bodies are with one another. For a body can touch a portion of another body's surface, but cannot occupy the entire region within its superficies; and a spirit can be mapped point by point onto the body it occupies. The soul is able to actuate the body it fills through ὑλοπαθία [hylopathy], the soul's natural sympathy with matter which is

A power in a Spirit of offering so near to a corporeal emanation from the Center of life, that it will so perfectly fill the receptivity of Matter into which it has penetrated, that it is very difficult or impossible for any other Spirit to possess the same; and therefore of becoming hereby so firmly and closely united to a Body, as both to actuate and to be acted upon, to affect and be affected thereby.⁸³

The power to move and actuate matter need not itself be corporeal. Indeed it cannot be, since matter is conceived as lacking all powers.⁸⁴ But More seems to have said that the secondary extended substance emanated by the soul approaches materiality so closely as to possess a power over matter.

He suggested an analogy between the powers of the soul and the power of God: "the most pure of all spirits"—who created that "most gross of all things," namely matter. For those who understand and accept such a doctrine "it is not hard ... to conceive, that there may be a certain faculty in the Soul, which in some manner, though very shadowishly, answers to that Power in God of creating Matter." Spirits then, by their participation in divine power, "may emit a certain Material Vertue, either spontaneously or naturally, by which they may intimately inhere in the Subject Matter, and be sufficiently close united therewith."⁸⁵ The spirit's complete penetration of its body allows "the communication of vital Impresses (and all impresses here are vital, though not all Perceptions, nor any of them Motions)." These impressions are "not made by the jogging or

⁸³ AA 153.

⁸⁴ IS 32-33.

⁸⁵ TNS 183.

crowding of parts, but by Spiritual Sympathy, which is more loose and free from those restrictions that are in the Mechanical laws of Matter." The cause of most corporeal phenomena is a "Vital Oneness, which consists in Coactivity and Sympathy of parts." This, he insisted (in contrast to the contempt he showed for Vaughan's use of such notions), is not to "take sanctuary in the Asylum of Fools," since merely mechanical actions have been shown to provide inadequate explanations of the relevant phenomena.⁸⁶

The soul's central point or "Root" from which its extended portion emanates is, according to More, "confined to the Fourth Ventricle of the Brain" where it acts as the "Centre of Perception." The extended portion of the soul animates the animal spirits through its plastic powers. In this way it is an instrument of the "central soul's" perception, while itself remaining incapable of perception.⁸⁷ More defended the plausibility of the soul's material powers by reminding the reader that "from the highest Life, viz. the Deity, there does result that which has no Life nor Sense at all, to wit the stupid Matter." By allowing the analogy between cosmogonic processes and the soul's activities in the body, "we may admit, that precious part of the Soul in which resides Perception, Sense and Understanding, may send forth such an essential Emanation from itself as is utterly devoid of all Sense and Perception."⁸⁸ More followed the Greek Neoplatonists in calling the soul's bodily life the *ἔδωλον ψυχῆς* (the image or phantom of the soul) which, in his *Defense of the Philosophick Cabbala*, he called her "vital Energie upon the Body."⁸⁹

While More placed the soul in vital union with matter, he insisted that the matter itself possesses nothing of that life or perception for which it acts as instrument.⁹⁰ The first material instruments by which the soul acts upon its grosser body are medical or animal spirits. More identified these spirits with "the first and second Element of Des-cartes; which is the most subtile and active Body that is in the World, and is of the very same nature that the Heaven and

⁸⁶ CSPWI: "Preface General," XIV-XV.

⁸⁷ On the role of animal or "medical" spirits in biological theory see Pagel 1967; idem 1935; Walker 1958; idem 1975; idem 1984; Debus 1984; Hamesse 1981; Finamore 1985; Dodd 1963.

⁸⁸ JS 109.

⁸⁹ CC 91.

⁹⁰ JS 120-121.

Stars are.”⁹¹ More did not regard the soul as the motor of these spirits, for “if it were an immediate faculty of the Soul to contribute motion to any matter” he could not conceive how “we should ever be weary of motion.” Rather, the soul’s action upon these spirits must be that of merely determining their direction of motion, “which the more subtile and agitated it is, the more easily by reason of its own mobility is it determined by her.” And weariness must be due to the dissipation of the animal spirits as the soul uses them.⁹²

The animal spirits are not only the instruments whereby the soul controls its body, but the instruments of intellectual thought itself when the soul “meditates and excogitates various theorems.”⁹³ This is evident, More argued, from the fact that “change of Air, or Dis-temper and Diseasedness” hinder the mind “in her Inventive and purely Intellectual Operations.”⁹⁴ More concluded that the “closer and more noble intellectual Operations of the Soul” are performed “by the assistance of more tenuious and fiery Spirits.”⁹⁵ For this reason, prayerful “sighs and a vehement Yerning after God and Virtue” give physical assistance to the soul as it meditates upon spiritual things. For this “pious Anxiety” tends to “exercise and rarifie the Blood and Spirits” as “we pour into them new supplies of pure and hallow’d Air.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ *IS* 119; see also 94-98.

⁹² *IS* 97. More allows that after death the soul may impart motion as well as direction to its vehicle. “The reason hereof is, because her Aethereal Vehicle consists partly of smooth spherical Figures, and partly of tenuious Matter, so exceeding liquid that it will without any violence comply to any thing” (*IS* 149)

⁹³ So, for example, the aerial or ethereal vehicle humans will inhabit upon death is more sensitive and responsive (eg. Nicolson 1930, 291). But at other times he treats the body as a source of evil and corruption. So, for example, he writes that “there is εἰδῶλον ψυχῆς, that Life which resides in the Body, and is but a Shadow of the Soul; the darkened Cave of evil delusions, falsehood and deceit; a den of all Serpentine Natures, false Spectrums, Magical Allurements, thick Mists, benumbing Vapours, execrable Whisperings, vain Terrour, false Delight, bewitching Apparitions, fair flitting Phantasms, deceivable suggestions, besotting Attractions” (More 1692, 187).

⁹⁴ *IS* 97.

⁹⁵ *DST* 240.

⁹⁶ More [1690] 1930, 207. More’s views about the soul’s need for a material vehicle result in some surprising claims about the physical side of thought. For example, he seriously entertains the claim that “there be certain Marks sealed in the Brain upon the seeing or considering this or that Object, whereby the Soul would impreß the memory thereof upon her more deeply; the virtue of remembring by this would be in that she had once joyned such a Thought or Representation with

6.4.3. *Pneumatology and Divine Governance: The Spirit of Nature and the Providential Order*

For More, the religious meaning of the world depended not only on the immateriality and immortality of the human soul, but on the vital character of natural processes and the providential guidance of the cosmos. Religious meaning required as its context an anthropocentric sacramentalism in which the natural world is divinely moved and shaped for the sake of human deification. Those who (because of temperament, prejudice, or education) could not perceive this providential order must be shown the degree to which natural phenomena exceed the power of mechanical causes. It would then become manifest that the world rests within the absolute, immobile, and penetrable extension of the divine essence, and that the universe is governed by the vital activities of a Spirit of Nature subordinate to God. Through his doctrine of space, More developed a conception of a God who is both transcendent (and therefore irreducible to the creatural realm) and immanent through an immediate presence at every point of the universe.⁹⁷ Making the divine extension the locus of creatures

such an Impreß or Mark ..." (IS 10). He also argues against Hobbes on his own terms by allowing that corporeal motion precedes perception, "so it is necessary that universally in all internal Cogitations also certain Corporeal Motions precede those Perceptions ...: For no sense would thence arise without resistance of something it hit against.... Whence it is plain that alwaies corporeal Re-action or Collision precedes Perception, and that every Perception is a kind of feeling, which lasts so long as this resistance or impreß of motion lasts; but that ceasing, is extinguish'd, the Matter being then as stupid as in a Pig of Lead. And that therefore as in general there is alwaies Corporeal motion where there is Cogitation, so the diversification of this motion and collision causes the diversification of cogitations, and so they run hand in hand perpetually; the one never being introduced without the fore-leading of the other, nor lasting longer then the other lasteth" (IS 5).

⁹⁷ In his correspondence with Descartes, More had insisted that the ability of God to influence bodies requires some account of how God may be said to be present to bodies. By conceiving of space as the divine extension, God's presence can be mapped onto the extension of every existing being, whether material or immaterial. Brian Copenhaver has shown that More's conception of space incorporates an idea he discovered in Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*: the Cabalistic notion that place (*maqom*) is an attribute of God (Copenhaver 1980, 523). In various places More addresses theological difficulties of attributing extension to God by such arguments as that extension is a necessary conception of the intellect and so is appropriate to a conception of a necessary being, that extension does not imply divisibility or impenetrability, that intellectual divisibility and mensurability do not imply physical discernibility, etc. (eg. TNS 171-174). On other antecedents to More's views on space and God, as well as to his view that all real existents are extended, see

would correct those philosophers who have "removed God into so high and remote an Excelsis, that they think him out of the call of mans voice, and man out of the reach of his sight."⁹⁸

However, divine governance involves not only an immediate presence of God to every creature, but an instrument—the Spirit of Nature or Hylarchic Principle through which God generally conducts the universe towards life and human fulfillment. An unbiased and rational investigation would show that many of the most common natural phenomena have their cause in this Spirit. While the Spirit of Nature was not to be confused with God, proof of its existence would contribute to the overthrow of atheism by destroying that "confidence that there is no such thing as a Spirit or Immaterial Being in the World" which gives the atheist a false sense of security "in that fond and foul Conclusion, That there is no God." The defeat of the atheists, who "according to the thickness of their conceptions cannot believe they have any soul at all," was to be accomplished by awakening "them out of this dull dream, to consider that a stone does not descend to the earth, but by the virtue of a Spirit that moves it downwards, nor a wooden Rundle ascend up in a Bucket of water, but by the same means." More claimed that proof of this Spirit's existence would further show that spirits do not, as the vulgar might think, merely pass through bodies but rather have the power to exert force upon them.⁹⁹

More's Spirit of Nature had obvious affinities to various alchemical and Neoplatonic notions of a Universal Spirit or World Soul, but was distinct from them in important ways. For example, as Dobbs has pointed out, in contrast to d'Espagne and le Fèvre, who held to a doctrine of a "Universal Spirit" which could be materialized into specific forms of matter, More's Spirit of Nature was conceived as a purely immaterial entity with power to affect matter.¹⁰⁰ More differed also from those Neoplatonic philosophers "that make but one Soul in the whole Universe, induing her with Sense, Reason, and Understanding: which Soul they will have to act in all Animals, Daemons themselves not excepted. In all which, say they,

Henry 1979. More's arguments for the absolute nature of space and the influence of these arguments on Newton have been the subject of much discussion. Among others see Boylan [1980] 1992, Hall 1990b, Burt 1954, Koyré 1958, Baker 1930.

⁹⁸ More 1692, 107.

⁹⁹ *DST*, 190-192.

¹⁰⁰ Dobbs 1975, 105.

it is One and the same Universal Soul that Hears, Sees, Reasons, Understands, &c."¹⁰¹

More's Spirit of Nature, like Cudworth's "General Plastic Nature of the Universe," lacked conscious awareness and imitated intelligence without itself having it, being "the mere Umbrage of Intellectuality, a faint and shadowy Imitation of Mind and Understanding, upon which it doth as Essentially depend, as the Shadow doth upon the Body."¹⁰² It acted for the sake of divine purposes which it did not understand and without knowing that it did so.¹⁰³ In his later work, More frequently used the language of emanation to explain the relation between God and the Spirit of Nature, calling it "the last Ideal or Omniform Efflux from God" and describing it as "a mute copy of the eternal Word ... [which] is in every part naturally appointed to doe all the best services that Matter is capable of, according to such or such modifications." He insisted that "this Spirit need not be perceptive itself," because it is "the natural Transcript of that which is knowing or perceptive, and is the lowest Substantial Activity from the all-wise God."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *JS* 9. More rejected such a notion on the empirical grounds that we are unaware of the thoughts and sensations of others. However, in the *Appendix to the Antidote Against Atheisme* More expressed some indifference as to whether his views might approach Averroistic notions of a universal soul: "whether these Archei be so many sprigs of the common Soul of the World, or particular subsistences of themselves; there is no great inconvenience in acknowledging that it may be either way. For it does not follow that if they be so many branches or distinct rayes of the great Soul of the World, that therefore they are the very Soul it self; and if they be not, they may have their pleasures and pains apart distinct from one another: and what is pleasure and pain to them, may haply be neither to their Original, moving her no more then the chirping of a Cricket does those that are attentive to a full Consort of loud Musick, or the biting of a Flea does a man tortured on a Rack" (*AA* 180-181). It has been claimed that More became increasingly sensitive to this problem and was led to place more emphasis upon the importance of individual souls whose entrance into bodies is only prepared for by the Spirit of nature which then conducts each soul to its respective body (eg., More 1682, 119). Evidence for this view is drawn from scholia added to the *Opera Omnia* which were particularly designed to distinguish more carefully between the Spirit of Nature and individual souls (Henry 1976; on Averroism see Kristeller 1979, 181-196).

¹⁰² Cudworth [1678] 1964, 171.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 156-8. As discussed in Chapter 2, More's "Notes upon Psychozoia" gave a description of "*Physis* or Nature" which prefigures the account of the Spirit of Nature in his later works. "*Physis*," he wrote, "is not the divine Understanding it self, but is as if you should conceive, an Artificers imagination separate from the Artificer, and left alone to work by it self without animadversion" (*CP* 139).

¹⁰⁴ *CSPWI*: "General Preface," XV-XVI. Cudworth also seems to have considered the "General Plastic Nature of the Universe" as a kind of hypostatized image of

Elsewhere, More described the Spirit of Nature as governed by the imagination and will of Christ's divine soul. At the same time More distinguished the Hylarchic Principle from the Holy Spirit (which he also called Christ's spirit)¹⁰⁵ for

though the Holy Spirit of God and the Spirit of Nature be every where present in the World, and lie in the very same points of space; yet their actions, applications or engagings with things are very distinct. For the Spirit of Nature takes hold only of Matter, remanding gross bodies towards the centre of the Earth, shaping Vegetables into all that various beauty we finde in them; but does not act at all on our Souls or Spirits with that divine illumination, no more then the Holy Spirit meddles with remanding of Stones downwards, or tumbling broken tiles from an house.¹⁰⁶

Introduced on the grounds that mechanical causes alone could not produce a world governed providentially and that a world teaming with life could only be the result of purposive action by a divine intelligence, the Hylarchic Principle had a puzzling theological status: it did not itself possess the requisite intelligence, was far below God, and in fact entirely wanted conscious awareness.¹⁰⁷ Further,

God's intelligence. As with More, the manner in which the Plastic Nature was said to proceed from God appears to be a kind of emanation, as Cudworth calls it an "Effulgency or Eradiation" from the mind of God (Cudworth [1678] 1964, 162). However, there is an important difference between Cudworth's conception of emanation and emanation as found in Aquinas and the Neoplatonists. For the latter, emanation was the overflowing or manifestation of the Absolute's perfections within the realm of the finite. The diluted perfections of the Absolute were innermost to every finite being, and each thing was, in a sense, contained in that which was above it. For this language of interiority, Cudworth substituted the imagery of exteriority. Cudworth conceives the Plastic Nature of the Universe as receiving a kind of impression from without that shapes its nature. He characterized it as a "Drudging Executioner" of "Laws and Commands, prescribed to it by a Perfect Intellect, and *imprest* upon it" (italics added). The action of the Plastic Nature on matter is likewise external, printing the "Stamps and Signatures [of God] everywhere" (ibid., 150). Because the Plastic Nature intermediates between God and the world it oversimplifies and misrepresents Cudworth to suggest, as McGuire does, that "Cudworth and More view nature as a static series of descending levels in the perfection of being, each reflecting a copy of that preceding it, the whole animated by the vivifying presence of God" (McGuire 1977, 97-98).

¹⁰⁵ MG 237. This view of Plastic Nature does not seem to have been shared by Burthogge, who appears to regard the Holy Spirit as the Plastic Nature, which he conceived as "a Spirit of Life" which is "present everywhere, in all the Parts of the Universe." He explained individual participations in God through the Neoplatonic doctrine of reception according to the capacity of the recipient (Burthogge 1921, 143ff.; idem [1694] 1976), 139-142, 256-261).

¹⁰⁶ MG 458.

¹⁰⁷ CSPWI: "General Preface," XV.

while More secured the immanence of deity by equating absolute space with the divine extension, to space he attributed no causal powers. How then did these doctrines contribute to a display of the world's religious qualities?

6.4.4. *Pneumatology and the Organic Universe*

The Spirit of Nature established divine interiority—that spiritual forces emanate from God to animate the cosmos. The vectors of spiritual influence do not move from a God beyond the world to the world's surface. For there is a vast difference between that “artificial Architecture, when an external person acts upon Matter” and that “vital fabrication” in which from “a more particular and near union with that Matter it thus intrinsically shapes out and organizes” the body from within.¹⁰⁸ In the *Divine Dialogues*, More emphasized that “the Primordials of the World are not Mechanicall, but Spermaticall or Vital; not made by rubbing and filing and turning and shaving, as in a Turner's or a Blacksmith's Shop, but from some universal principle of inward Life and Motion.”¹⁰⁹

For this reason More, like Cudworth, not only was worried that the Mechanical Philosophy was paving the road to atheism, but was unhappy with those pious thinkers who emphasized the mechanical features of the cosmos in order to display the architectonic wisdom and power of God—as if the universe, because of its mechanical structure, required nothing further from God than a constant supply of motive force. Cudworth complained about those who made “God to be nothing else in the World, but an Idle Spectator,” and that the “Living hand” of God had been replaced by “a Carpenter's or Artificer's Wooden hand, moved by strings and wires,” thus making “a kind of Dead and Wooden World ... that hath nothing either Vital nor Magical at all in it.”¹¹⁰ Cudworth urged that

¹⁰⁸ *JS* 102.

¹⁰⁹ *DD* 1:37-38. These same notions characterize the cosmological imagery of the philosophical poems. For example, the following section of *Psychozoia*, canto I, stanzas 42-42: “all besprinkled with centrall spots,/ Dark little spots, is this hid inward veil:/ But when the hot bright dart doth pierce these Knots,/ Each one dispreads it self according to their lots./ When they dispread themselves, then gins to swell/ Dame Psyches outward vest .../ Forth from the central spot; yet as confin'd/ To certain shape, according to the mind/ Of the first centre ...” (*CP* 170).

¹¹⁰ Cudworth [1678] 1964, 148. On how the metaphor of the world as a puppet or *neuropasta* was used to criticize the Mechanical Philosophy see Gabbey 1992.

"the Laws or Commands of the Deity ... ought not to be looked upon, neither as Verbal things, nor as mere Will and Cogitation in the Mind of God; but as an Energetical and Effectual Principle, constituted by the Deity, for the bringing of things to Pass."¹¹¹ Both More and Cudworth sought an account of divine governance and presence which would weld spiritual meaning to the physical universe without eradicating the distinction between God and creatures.¹¹²

The soul's presence in the body was the model by which to understand the indwelling through which God and all spirits actuate the

¹¹¹ Cudworth [1678] 1964, 161. Cudworth criticized Descartes' singular emphasis on the Divine will and power, "This being plainly to destroy the Deity, by making one Attribute thereof, to Devour and Swallow up another." This remark occurs in relation to Descartes' voluntaristic account of eternal truths, "... For to suppose God to Understand and to be Wise only by his Will, is all one as to suppose him, to have Really no understanding at all" (ibid., 646-7).

¹¹² Cudworth's concerns about pantheism are apparent in his criticisms of Proclus and the Greek Neoplatonists who "made Several Degrees of Gods ...; yet did they no where clearly distinguish, betwixt the Deity properly so called, and the Creature, nor shew how far in this Scale, the True Deity went, and where the Creature began. But as it were melting the Deity by degrees, and bringing it down lower and lower, they made the Juncture and Commissure betwixt God and the Creature, so smooth and close, that where they indeed parted, was altogether undiscernible. They rather implying them to differ only in Degrees, or that they were not Absolute but Comparative Terms, and consisted in More and Less" (Cudworth [1678] 1964, 557).

Cudworth also criticizes Plotinus' "Philosophick Pride and Arrogancy" for having written "That this Soul of ours, is also Uniform (or of the same Species) with that Mundane Soul [which is the third hypostasis]; For if any one ... will consider it as it is in it Self, Pure and Naked, or stript from all things adventitious to it, he shall find it to be in like manner venerable." This Cudworth regarded as a "Monstrous Degradation of that third Hypostasis ..., and little other than an Absolute Creaturizing of the same" (ibid., 593). Boyle too was worried about pantheism. In *A Free Inquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* ..., he wrote that "Our doctrine may keep many, that were wont, or are inclined, to have an excessive veneration of Nature, from running, or being seduced, into those extravagant and sacrilegious errors, that have been upon plausible pretenses embraced not only by many of the old heathen philosophers, but by diverse modern professors of Christianity, who have of late revived, under new names and dresses, the impious errors of the Gentiles. This I venture to say, because many of the heathen writers ... acknowledge indeed a God ..., but meant such a God, as they often too little discriminated from matter ..., and is very differing from the true one adored by Christians and Jews: for ours is a God, first, infinitely perfect; and then secondly, by consequence, both incorporeal and too excellent to be united to matter, as to animate it like the heathen's mundane soul; ... [and] incapable of being divided, and having either human souls or other beings, as it were, torn or carved out ... so as to be truly parts ... of his own substance" (Boyle [1772] 1966, 5:250).

world.¹¹³ The Spirit of Nature was the life which enlivens, as it were, the body of the universe under the direction of the supreme intelligence.¹¹⁴ When faced with the objection that “a Substance devoid of all sense and perception, and therefore incapable of premeditated contrivance, would [not] be supposed fit to form the Matter into such exquisite organization,” More responded that organisms live not through the conscious activity of the rational soul, but through those unconscious functions of the lower soul which intersects matter.¹¹⁵ As the phantasms of our soul,

(which are but subtile matter), cause the soul immediately to exert itself into this or that Imagination, no knowledge or premeditation interceding; so such or such a preparation or predisposition of the Matter of the World will cause the Spirit of Nature to fall upon this or that kinde of Fabrication or Organization, no perception or consultation being interposed.¹¹⁶

The Spirit of Nature animates the world as the lower souls of humans animate their bodies. It is then like the “secondary” or “emanatory” substance which proceeds from the soul’s center to extend it. Given the analogy between God’s presence in the world and the soul’s presence in its body, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Spirit of Nature is the lower soul of deity itself which lives bodily in the cosmos—that the “Inferiour Soul of the World”¹¹⁷ is also the “Inferiour Soul” of God.

The modes of causality which govern the universe as a whole are organic, and primary among these is sympathetic action which involves a unity born of congruity. The soul typically moves disparate portions of its body in coordinated efforts, and synthesizes information from diverse sensory organs. The soul’s integral extension confers on its body a unity which transcends the capacities of divisible matter. So, for example,

[M]y thought of moving of my Toe being represented within my Brain, by the power of my Soul I can, without sending Spirits into my Toe, but onely by making use of them that are there, move my Toe

¹¹³ *AT* 5:347.

¹¹⁴ More further emphasizes that the view “that there is no life but what is Cogitative, is a conceit taken up but yesterday, and I believe will as soon expire” (*DST*, 22-23).

¹¹⁵ Compare Plotinus’ model of emanation in *EN* 3:3.7.

¹¹⁶ *IS* 11-12; see also *CSPWI*: “General Preface,” XVI.

¹¹⁷ *IS* 193-4.

as I please, by reason of that Unity and Activity that is peculiar to my Soul as a Spiritual Substance that pervades my whole Body.¹¹⁸

The interaction of soul and body requires not only the immaterial unity conferred by the soul, but also vital congruity—that natural kinship between souls and matter which results from the manner in which higher levels of reality bring into existence beings which then imitate and participate in their causes. Physical being expresses spiritual being and, when shaped by the Spirit of Nature into organic forms, draws souls into itself that it might function as their vehicles or instruments of action.¹¹⁹

Vital congruity was the basis of sympathetic relationships between ontologically distinct entities. This notion, so typical of Neoplatonism, was incorporated into natural magic which utilized the “natural concord of things that are alike.”¹²⁰ For that “which is sympathetic” to another “is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror able to catch [the reflection of] a form.”¹²¹ As the individual body expresses the individual soul, so Plotinus conceived that the whole universe

is all bound together in shared experience [συμπαθής] and is like one living creature, and that which is far is really near, just as, in one of the individual living things, a nail or horn or finger or one of the other limbs which is not contiguous: the intermediate part leaves a gap in the experience and is not affected, but that which is not near is affected. For the like parts are not situated next to each other, but are separated by others, but share their experiences because of their likeness, and it is necessary that something which is done by a part not situated beside it should reach a distant part; and since it is a living thing and all belongs to a unity nothing is so distant in space that it is not close enough to the nature of the living thing to share experience.¹²²

¹¹⁸ *IS* 193-194.

¹¹⁹ *IS* 120-1. For example, Plotinus writes that “All things which exist, as long as they remain in being, necessarily produce from their own substance, in dependence on their present power, a surrounding reality directed to what is outside them, a kind of image of the archetypes from which it was produced” (*EN* 5:1.5.30ff.); and that “In each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to substance and one which goes out from the substance; and that which belongs to substance is the active actuality which is each particular thing, and the other activity derives from that first one, and must in everything be a consequence of it, different from the thing itself ...” (*EN* 5:4.2).

¹²⁰ *EN* 4:4.41.

¹²¹ *EN* 4:3.11.

¹²² *EN* 4:4.32. For more on sympathetic magic, especially during the Renaissance, see Walker 1975; Yates 1964; idem 1969; idem 1972.

More drew on these notions to explain reports (widely discussed in his day) “of Sympathetic Pains, Asswagements and Cures.”

He argued that these phenomena¹²³ must be caused “by some such power as makes Strings that be tuned Unisons, (though on several instruments), the one being touched, the other to tremble and move very sensibly;” for none of these phenomena could “be resolved into any Mechanical Principle.”¹²⁴ In all these examples the cause must be

some one Incorporeal Being, which has a different Unity and Activity from Matter, but yet a sympathy therewith; which affecting this Immaterial Being, makes it affect the Matter in the same manner in another place, where it does symbolize with that other in some pre-disposition or qualification, as these two strings do in being tuned Unisons to one another: and this, without sending any particles to the Matter it does thus act upon.¹²⁵

From our own experience of the soul’s interaction with body we understand that such modes of action are possible. Since the phenomena in question exceed the power of merely mechanical causes, More concludes that “there is some such Principle as we call the Spirit of Nature, or the inferiour Soul of the World, into which such Phaenomena as these are to be resolved.”¹²⁶ The actions of this being are “Magical, though not in an unlawful sense; that is to say, it is not to be resolved into mere Matter, of what thinness or subtilty soever you please, but into the Unity of the Soul of the Universe ..., and into the Continuity of the subtile Matter, which answers to our Animal Spirits.”¹²⁷ Spiritual causes move from the world’s center in God through layers to its surface, epigenetically shaping the world into a physical expression of deity.

More claimed that the actions of the Spirit of Nature were subject to nomological description, for it is “one and same every where, and acting alwaies alike upon like occasion.”¹²⁸ But because it acts

¹²³ Among other things, More has in mind the famous controversy over the use of Weapon-salve, in which it was claimed that a wounded party could be cured by smearing “the knife or Sword that wounded him” with Weapon-salve (*JS* 103-104).

¹²⁴ For example, he argues that the vibration of other strings than the one struck cannot be caused by the motion of air, because a hair, placed near the strings, would also move; but it does not.

¹²⁵ *JS* 193-194.

¹²⁶ *JS* 193-194.

¹²⁷ *JS* 103-104.

¹²⁸ *JS* 199.

through plastic powers (“not by knocking or crowding” but “by vital transposing of parts”) the description must be cast in terms of organical rather than mechanical laws.¹²⁹ The Hylarchic Principle has predispositions or reflexes which, in accord with general providence, are triggered “according to the sundry predispositions and occasions” of matter.¹³⁰

More claimed that in Boyle’s pneumatical experiments the Spirit of Nature intervened when “that matter is misplaced, and the Hylostatick Spirit of the Universe would dispose of it better.”¹³¹ He explained that

A Bucket of water, while it is in the water comes up with ease to him that draws it at the Well; but so soon as it comes into the Air, though there be the same earth under it that there was before, it feels now exceeding more weighty. Of which I conceive the genuine reason is, because the Spirit of Nature, which ranges all things in their due order, acts proportionately strongly to reduce them thereto, as they are more heterogeniously and disproportionately placed as to their consistencies. And therefore by how much more crass and solid a body is above that in which it is placed, by so much the stronger effort the Spirit of Nature uses to reduce it to its right place; but the less it exceeds the crassness of the Element it is in, the effort is the less or weaker.¹³²

But these sketchy suggestions do little to assign a precise explanatory role to More’s Hylarchic Principle.

More also made apparently conflicting claims about the relation between mechanical and vital laws. In the *Antidote Against Atheisme*, More described the universe as a machine, a “great Automaton,” upon which the immaterial powers of the Spirit of Nature (which he called “the Vicarious Power of God”) are exercised. The Spirit of Nature “does tug ... stoutly and resolutely against the Mechanick laws of Matter, and ... forcibly resists or nulls one common Law of Nature for the more seasonable exercise of another.”¹³³ However, later, for example in his response to Matthew Hale’s *Difficiles Nugae*, More removed the opposition between mechanical laws and the activity of the Spirit of Nature. He attributed the “laws of motion” to “innate or essential” properties of the Spirit of Nature

¹²⁹ DST 22-23, 98-99.

¹³⁰ IS 193.

¹³¹ DST 140-141.

¹³² More 1682, 131.

¹³³ AA 46.

itself, which he termed the “universal Transposer of the parts of the matter of the world” responsible for “both motion and union.”¹³⁴ Mechanical interactions only occurred as accidents of vital influence. For example,

The descent of a stone is vital, as I have proved in my *Enchiridion metaphysicum*, but its hitting or occursion against any thing whereby it moves, that is only Mechanical motion in the thing so moved.¹³⁵

Here the bodies of the universe are described as though they lie within a field of force which conducts them according to general patterns which are suited for life and human fulfillment. As metallic objects moving within a magnetic field may suffer collisions which only briefly impede their response to the magnetic force, so sometimes are physical objects briefly impeded in their response to the directive force of the Spirit of Nature. This grants mechanism some place, but one so trivial that in the *Divine Dialogues*, More famously claimed that “there is no purely-Mechanicall Phaenomenon in the whole Universe.”¹³⁶ The Spirit of Nature was then theoretically subject to nomological description, but only in terms of general and vague ends which were not congenial to rigorous experimental prediction. A shepherd guiding her flock to a new pasture could state her goal, if we asked her, yet her visible behavior involves constant adjustments to the erratic behavior of her individual sheep as their travel is hindered by objects in the terrain, by the density of the flock, etc. In similar fashion, mechanical interactions affect, but do not finally determine, the motions of objects under the influence of the Spirit of Nature.¹³⁷

The Spirit of Nature’s role in the world’s governance absolved God of involvement with and responsibility for evil. In this way More

¹³⁴ *DST* 90, 144; see also *OO* 3:652.

¹³⁵ *DST* 98-99.

¹³⁶ *DD* I:A 67. For a further discussion of the evolution of More’s attitudes towards Descartes and the Mechanical Philosophy, see Gabbey 1982 and 1990.

¹³⁷ This provides grounds for softening some of the harsh criticisms which have been leveled at More for claiming that the Spirit of Nature operates in a law-like fashion. Some have argued, for example, that “More’s attribution of function to the Spirit of Nature is highly arbitrary, and that it is a catch-all for the inexplicable (Greene 1962, 461). Boylan has observed that “the spirit of nature is really antimechanical in that it offers exceptions to the mechanical rules and overtly breaks others. It is both capricious and regular. In this way it points to God’s existence in much the same way miracles do” (Boylan 404).

fell prey to the fears for which he criticized Aristotle, who made God

sit upon the *primum mobile* ...; Afraid, forsooth, that the Godhead should be defiled, if his Presence would be among men on the earth.¹³⁸

More would not allow that God, through direct and constant involvement with human affairs, “bear[s] a part amongst Pimps and Bawds, and pocky whores and Whoremasters.”¹³⁹ Thus the Hylarchic Principle, rather than a directly involved deity, was the source of laws which generally contribute to the providential structure of a universe, suiting it for life and for human development by “transcending the nature and power of Matter ... in pursuance of such General designs as are best for the Whole.”¹⁴⁰ However, “the Eye of particular Providence is not therein,” for otherwise “why does a tyle fall upon the head of him that passes by in the streets, goe he to either play or Sermon? And how come those bungles in monstrous productions, or those inept and self-thwarting Attempts of this Spirit in certain experiments about the finding out a Vacuum?” In such instances the Spirit of Nature (which lacks omnipotence and omniscience) took the blame instead of God.¹⁴¹ Consequently, the Spirit of Nature satisfied two contradictory conditions: it acted as the instrument of God’s continuous governance and immanent activity, while at the same time distancing God from immediate involvement with the unsavory things of the world.

6.5. CONCLUSION

The charges of enthusiasm More leveled against mechanical atheists indicated that his anti-enthusiasm was not merely a concern about false claims to inspiration. “Enthusiasm,” which he earlier

¹³⁸ More 1692, 107.

¹³⁹ More 1682, 9.

¹⁴⁰ AA 46. More mentions, as a specific example, that in the Spirit of Nature’s governance of matter “no less good then the living and breathing of Animals is aimed at in this so industriously and peremptorily keeping the parts of the Aire together” as is evidenced in Boyle’s pneumatic experiments (AA 46).

¹⁴¹ CSPWI: “General Preface,” XVI. In his *Philosophical Poems*, More claimed that because “*Physis* or Nature” has no animadversion, it “is sometimes puzzeld and bungells in ill disposed matter, because its power is not absolute and omnipotent” (CP 139).

defined as “nothing else but a misconceit of being inspired,”¹⁴² was extended to any system of thought which threatened the spiritual meanings he found in the world or which encouraged behaviors or interests contrary to the deiform life. Mechanical atheists were enthusiasts because of their blindness to the spiritual dimensions of the cosmos—a blindness which, according to More’s diagnosis, could only be the result of pride, self-will, disordered passions, and fascination with corporeality. Their belief that mechanical interactions of matter could produce all the phenomena of nature and their inability to distinguish between the effects of spiritual and material causes were both symptoms of this blindness. They could not see what is obvious to an illuminated soul: that the world is stamped with signs of architectonic wisdom and divine superintendency exercised through the vital powers of spirits, and that mechanical causes alone cannot account for even the simplest ordinary phenomena.

Against the mechanists, More employed concepts characteristic of alchemy. He had excoriated Vaughan for using notions like “Sympathy and Antipathy, which all men call *Asylum Ignorantiae*” in his explanation of how seminal natures exert an influence on matter.¹⁴³ Yet More made these categories central to his explanation of spiritual influence and argued that “to resolve a Phaenomenon into Sympathy, is not always to take sanctuary in the asylum of Fools.” What was disgraceful and ridiculous in Vaughan was, in his own hands, “the result of a very subtil and operose Demonstration” and “to philosophize to the height.”¹⁴⁴

To exhibit the spiritual structure and providential order of the cosmos, More made extensive use of organical metaphors and compared the life of God in the world to the bodily life of the soul. Typical was More’s claim that to understand God’s governance of the universe, we should observe that

there is a spiritual Substance in our selves in which both these Properties do reside, viz. of Understanding, and of moving Corporeall Matter; let us but enlarge our minds so as to conceive as well as we can of a Spiritual Substance that is able to move and actuate all Matter whatsoever never so farre extended, and after what way and manner soever it please, and that it has not the knowledge only of this or that

¹⁴² *ET* 2.

¹⁴³ More 1651, 165.

¹⁴⁴ *CSPW*I: “General Preface,” XIV-XV.

particular thing, but a distinct and plenary Cogniscence of all things; and we have indeed a very competent apprehension of the Nature of the Eternall and Invisible God, who, like the Soul of Man, does not indeed fall under Sense, but does every where operate, so that his presence is easily to be gathered from what is discovered by our outward Senses.¹⁴⁵

More also repeatedly compared the Spirit of Nature to the “lower” soul of humans which governs involuntary bodily activities.

These analogies suggested that the universe is an organic whole governed by vital powers which issue from God as the vital or plastic human soul issues from its “central spirit.” This quite literally makes the world God’s body. In establishing the intersection of spirit with matter and of God with the world, More introduced a metaphysical system as pantheistic in its tendencies as Boehme’s and Vaughan’s. These tendencies are also apparent in Ralph Cudworth, More’s fellow Platonist, who used the language of emanation to explain creation in such a way as almost to deny creation *ex nihilo*. He claimed that creatures are “but the Energies, Rays, Images, or Shadows, of the Deity. For a Substance which was not, to be Made by God, or a Being Infinitely Perfect; this is not for it to be Made Out of Nothing, in the Impossible Sense, it coming from him who is All.”¹⁴⁶

More’s anti-mechanical writings were stylistically remote from his *Philosophical Poems*. In his poetry he used linguistic protocols to weld narrative and metaphor to theory. He exhibited religious meanings by moving back and forth between poetic rhetoric, psychology, cosmogony, and other domains of theoretical discourse. His natural philosophy presented ideas without explicit recourse to poetic or narrative devices. At the same time, because his pneumatology introduced causes, processes, and structures derived from religious metaphors, More’s natural philosophy constantly exhibited the dialectical understanding of spirituality that characterized his poetry.

On the one hand, this again demonstrates that the metaphors of More’s poems were deprived of their “open-endedness” in the service of a highly ramified theoretical interpretation. This, I have argued, amounted to an effort to control the symbols and metaphors by which to exhibit religious meaning, because their mean-

¹⁴⁵ AA 36.

¹⁴⁶ Cudworth [1678] 1964, 748.

ings were reduced to theoretical specifics which interpreted the passions (determining which were elevating, demeaning, cognitive, delusory, etc.), assigned positive and negative religious values to a variety of human interests, and controlled the context within which the religious meaning of life could be constructed. For these reasons, the control which More sought over these symbols and metaphors was integrally connected to the regulation of religious meaning itself. On the other hand, More's pneumatology exhibited the extent to which his natural philosophy was governed by what might be called poetic concerns. His pneumatology was an attempt to weld explanations of natural phenomena to a metaphysics in which it was possible to emplot the episodes of life over the surface of structures and processes which originate in deity and to construct life as a journey upwards or inward to deity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

It was the very nature of religious enthusiasm to raise questions about whether final authority resides in the Church, the scriptures, or in the immediate activity of the Holy Spirit. Each of these options represents differently the manner in which the individual is led to salvation and religious knowledge.¹ In this respect, More's polemics occurred within the context of a longer debate which had never been absent from Christianity, but which was made more acute by the Reformation. The Quakers represented a particularly serious challenge to religious authority, because they established the Holy Spirit, in its influence on individuals, as the criterion by which all else—including the Bible—was to be judged.² Kolakowski has noted (although not exactly in these terms) that anti-enthusiasm can be understood as a struggle for the authority of the priestly class over charismatic groups and individuals; and that the established church often succeeds in silencing dissent by adopting and so "neutralizing" the themes of religious radicals.³ Some scholars have suggested that More and other Latitudinarians were employing such a strategy in their emphasis upon experience and the virtues.⁴ This, however, depicts More in rather Machiavellian terms which fail to do justice to the genuineness of his own mystical and moral interests. While More was politically motivated by the challenge to his social position and authority, he was also motivated by commitment to a particular religious meaning of the universe.

One obstacle to understanding anti-enthusiasm is that it rested in religious interests which are not well captured by the canonical categories used to analyze the early modern period. Terms like "rationalism," "irrationality," and "empiricism," are often employed as if they have unequivocal meanings independently of context, whereas the meanings of the words "reason," "experience," or "rational" varied among these thinkers of the seventeenth century and

¹ Heyd 1981, 260; Lee 1931, 58; Nuttall 1946; Dockrill 1985, 150-153.

² Nuttall 1946, 28 and 30.

³ Kolakowski 1969, 31-51.

⁴ Burnham 1974; Heyd 1981, 262; Hill 1969.

none of these meanings were exactly the same as our own. It has also been difficult for even those scholars who are sympathetic to the religious radicals and occult philosophers to avoid the assumption that their religious experiences were a result of insanity or mental disorder. This obscures the nature of the contest between enthusiasts and anti-enthusiasts by employing the very constructs which anti-enthusiasts used as ideological weapons in the seventeenth century. Keith Thomas, for example, writes that historians should "hesitate before dismissing all these prophets and healers as psychotic, the victims of hallucination brought on by fasting or of hysteria induced by sexual repression." But then he goes on to say that it "is not enough to describe such men as lunatics," for the historian must "explain why their *lunacy* took this particular form."⁵

In looking at More's rhetoric and his various targets it is not hard to see why his anti-enthusiasm has been difficult to characterize. He had much in common with his enthusiastical opponents. With Vaughan and the Quakers, More shared concerns about the revitalization of a Christianity which had fallen into formalism, hypocrisy, and ethical indifference. They all emphasized spiritual inwardness and moral effort and adopted an illuminationist epistemology in which death to self and sin was the necessary prelude to religious knowledge. They all viewed the natural order non-mechanistically as a providential context for the realization of divinely appointed human ends. All used organic metaphors to express the character of God's life in the soul, and emphasized the centrality of Christ. More's metaphysics and cosmogony shared deep affinities with Vaughan's. Both drew on Neoplatonic and Hermetic sources, advanced vitalism, and were motivated by concerns about the evacuation of meaning from a universe accounted for in strictly mechanical terms.⁶ In his attack on mechanical enthusiasm,

⁵ Thomas 1971, 149; italics added.

⁶ More also shared with alchemists the belief that "Creation is nothing else but an Emanation of the Creature from God, as Aquinas has determined" and describes this emanation through a cosmogonic reading of *Genesis* (CC 138). More, like Vaughan, emphasized the creation of spiritual substances which then enter into and epigenetically transform matter, and the role of "Universal Spirit" as the "subtile and Aethereal" agent of this transformation—a kind of liquid fire which actuates, agitates and guides gross matter (eg., CC 16-18, 22). Consider, for example, how easily the following might be taken for a passage from Sendivogius: "there went up a moist Vapour from the Earth, which being matur'd and concocted by the Spirit of the world, which is very active in the Heavens or Air, became a pre-

More employed shamelessly many of the very concepts and metaphors he called enthusiastical in Vaughan. More criticized the allegorical interpretations of scriptures through which the Quakers brought a living meaning to the dead letter (claiming that it was the result of a carnal desire to escape the rigors of true spirituality)⁷ and attacked Vaughan for reading cosmogonic processes into scriptures. Yet he himself accepted as the third principle of scriptural hermeneutics that "Natural Things, Persons, Motions and Actions, declared or spoken of in Scripture, admit of also many times a Mystical, Moral or Allegorical sense."⁸ The similarities between More's conception of religion and the Quakers' have caused more than a few commentators to place them both in the same camp.⁹

Mulligan has suggested that, because this period is characterized by the absence of sharp discontinuities between conceptions of reason and revelation, widely differing viewpoints often drew upon the same texts and traditions in order to establish a monopoly on the notion of "right reason." She attributes the stentorian tone of these attempts to anxieties about being associated with the antinomian epistemology of the Ranters and other sects who freed themselves from moral constraint with claims of illumination and private access to right reason.¹⁰ Crocker in turn has recently suggested that More must be understood in relation to a "rather complex didactic stance" in which, because his pneumatology tended to blur the boundaries between matter and spirit, he was engaged in a continual process of self-definition as he tried to distance himself from charges of heterodoxy like those leveled against the Quakers and Boehme.¹¹

cious balmy liquor and fit vehicle of Life, which descending down in some sort like dewy flowers upon the face of the Earth, moistened the ground; so that the warmth of the Sun gently playing upon the surface thereof, prepared matter variously for sundry sorts, not only of Seminal forms of Plants, but Souls of Animals also.... For God had so contriv'd by his Infinite Wisdome, that Matter thus or thus prepar'd should by a Vital congruity attract proportional forms from the World of Life, which is everywhere night at hand, and does very thoroughly inequitate the moist and unctuous Aire" (CC 22). See also CC 76-77.

⁷ CC 179-180.

⁸ CC 54.

⁹ For example, Hamilton 1981, 139-140, Nicolson 1930, 379-380.

¹⁰ Mulligan 1984, 396.

¹¹ Crocker 1990a, 150.

But in recognizing the commonalities between More and his opponents, we should not suppose that there were no genuine differences between them or that all apparent differences were politically motivated. They tell different stories, employ metaphysical assumptions to distinct ends, attach disparate meanings to the passions, have contrasting views of the natural order, and diverge in their ideals of religious activity. To say that religious meaning can be found only by subduing the passions in order to introversively contemplate deity contrasts significantly with the claim that religious meaning is found in the intensification of the passions and working with God for the redemption of all of nature. And both of these contrast with the claim that the meaningful life is one of abandonment to God's will as a prophet bringing the nations to final judgment. There is good reason to suppose that these differences in beliefs were connected to different worlds of experience.¹²

Like the religious and alchemical enthusiasts, More appealed to the epistemic authority of private illumination. In his appeals to a "spiritual sense" (the proper functioning of which requires moral purification, just as sight requires the health of the eyes) and to religious knowledge acquired through contact or union with God, More consciously appropriated a widely shared vocabulary designed to distinguish the spiritual life from mere "notional" knowledge of God. This vocabulary was used to indicate a transforming encounter with the sacred which exposed the spiritual qualities of the world to make them objects of experience. This same kind of language was used by Puritans to oppose dead religious "notions" with claims of a spiritual perception. They compared this to sensory perception, and likened the certainty of its deliverances to seeing the Sun and knowing that it is bright and light, and to tasting honey and knowing that it is sweet. Thomas Goodwin wrote that "The understanding, as made spiritual, is the palate of the soul."¹³ Claims of access to religious knowledge through illumination were a part of Christian discourse at least since Augustine.¹⁴ More's disagreement with others who, like himself, tried to go beyond notional religious knowledge, was about how to achieve this knowledge,

¹² On the relation between language, thought and experience see Henle 1958, 1-24.

¹³ Nuttall 1946, 38-39; Roberts 1968, 232.

¹⁴ For a discussion of Augustine and his influence on the Cambridge Platonists see Roberts 1968, 24ff.

what spiritual qualities it disclosed in the world, and how the meaningful life was to be constructed.

More's anti-enthusiasm, of which his philosophy was an integral part, cannot be understood by looking at his metaphysics or epistemology alone. Nor can his philosophy be understood without relating it to his anti-enthusiasm. His writings were unified by the goals of exhibiting and protecting the deiform life—a specific form of spirituality which he called “genuine enthusiasm”¹⁵—and of discrediting competing ideals of human fulfillment.

More and his disputants were trying to articulate religious meanings they had experienced. For each of them a particular kind of episode was the turning point. The moment of entry to spiritual power, understanding, and vitality was situated in a narrative and theoretical context which imparted a “before” and “after” and an “above” and “below.” On the one hand, this context made possible the experience of religious crisis by setting the conditions of entry, guiding expectations, and directing attention to relevant religious “facts.”¹⁶ On the other hand, it provided interpretive clues as to the meanings of feelings and emotions (like sorrow for sin, shame, and longing) and the character of the *ecstasis* which culminates the episode. This is not to say that context supplied all the content of the experiences,¹⁷ but that the content was conditioned by contextual understanding.

For these reasons, More's anti-enthusiasm was as much poetic, aesthetic, and narrative, as metaphysical or philosophical. More was not only engaged in theorizing, but in displaying those qualities through which the world had become a lens opening on the sacred, and in evoking attitudes through imagery, metaphor, rhapsody, scorn, and ridicule. At issue were how to achieve epistemic access to the divine (the cognitive value of emotion, observation, introspection, etc.) and what devotional attitudes or postures were appropriate to human beings (the weights, values, or qualities of various human interests and activities). All of this was connected to questions about the kinds of objects in the world and how they are related to the divine. Narrative understanding of how the religious life ought to be lived (its proper goals and how it is to be

¹⁵ *ET* 45.

¹⁶ Franks Davis 1989, 143-165; Young and Goulet 1994, 298ff.

¹⁷ See, for example, Katz 1978, 26-66; Franks Davis 1989 143-165. For rejoinders to Katz, see Forman 1990, esp. 9-19.

divided into moments of meaning) was meshed with psychology (which interprets feeling, emotion, and cognitive activity) and with description of the deep structure of being.

More's articulation of religious meaning wove together various disciplines and linguistic domains, or what Bakhtin has called "speech genres." These consist of relatively stable types of utterances, which are deployed in their heterogeneity, according to a plan of what meanings one wishes to express.¹⁸ This plan is enacted in linguistic protocols which, by moving back and forth between diverse domains of theory and modes of language, exhibit meaning dialectically, namely through "the interplay of various factors that mutually modify one another and may be thought of as voices in a dialogue or roles in a play, with each voice or role in its partiality contributing to the development of the whole."¹⁹ To paraphrase Haydon White's characterization of the historian's task, More, in attempting to express the meaning of the whole of life, was engaged in "an essentially *poetic* act, in which he *prefigures* the field of ... [experience] and constitutes it as a domain upon which to bring to bear the specific theories, narrative ideals, metaphors and models he will use to explain 'what was really happening in it'."²⁰ And these were brought to bear not just as theoretical explanations, but also by dialectical movements which displayed the meaning of imagination, passion, social action, etc., and determined what should count as veridical, what a "mere fancy," what should be appreciated, and what regarded with disgust or shame.

Within the interplay of these many factors, a given element had a kind of slippery existence. For instance, a term like "matter" could have a wealth of associations and meanings which would distinguish its meaning from its use in another dialectical setting. So we see the common Neoplatonic heritage of More and Vaughan as establishing a stronger kinship than More felt. Neoplatonic concepts like emanation and participation were particularly polyvalent because of the wide range of religious ideas they could be used to express. Although it is a bit of a digression, it is worth emphasizing this point by examining an example drawn from More's

¹⁸ Bakhtin 1986, 60-102.

¹⁹ Burke 1945, 403.

²⁰ White 1973, x.

disagreement with Richard Baxter in one of the final polemical exchanges of More's life.²¹

In September of 1681, More wrote to Baxter requesting his opinion on More's *The Easie, True and Genuine Notion of Spirit* which was included in Glanvill's *Saducismus triumphatus*.²² To More's dismay and astonishment, Baxter responded with a letter which denied the need for the immateriality of the soul. He further challenged the value of More's pneumatology by denying its conceptual clarity and epistemic justification.²³ In the 1682 edition of Glanvill's *Saducismus triumphatus* More published *A Letter to a learned Psychopyrist* which included, without permission, excerpts from Baxter's letter. More characterized Baxter as a "Psychopyrist" because of his appeal to fire and light as examples of entities which seemed to be on the border between matter and spirit, and which showed the possibility that spirits were active and subtle material beings. More's primary objection was that Baxter's views "sink into real Materialism, which is utterly inconsistent with the Existence of a God."²⁴ In the same year Baxter responded by publishing the entirety of the private letter along with two discourses: *Of the Immortality of Mans Soul, and the Nature of it, and other Spirits*, and *Of the Nature of Spirits; Especially Mans Soul*. The exchange ended with comments included by

²¹ On Baxter's importance to theology see Morgan 1946.

²² Henry 1986, 184.

²³ In addition to Baxter, Samuel Parker (Parker 1666, 73), Robert Boyle (Boyle 1672, 627-628), Robert Hooke (Hooke [1677] [1931] 1968, 182-195), and Matthew Hale (Hale 1677, 143) resisted More's pneumatology as not only unsuccessful, but as a hindrance to advancing the cause of religion. In addition to theological concerns, these members of the Royal Society also objected to More's injection of pneumatological considerations about the Spirit of Nature into pneumatological experiments. Hooke's comments are representative:

"We see then how needless it is to have recourse to an Hylarchick Spirit to perform all those things which are plainly and clearly performed by the common and known Rules of Mechanicks, which are easily to be understood and imagined, and are most obvious and clear to sense, and do not perplex our minds with unintelligible Idea's of things, which do no ways tend to knowledge and practice, but end in amazement and confusion.

"For supposing the Doctor had proved there were such an Hylarchick Spirit, what were we the better or the wiser unless we also know how to rule and govern this Spirit? ... For if all things be done by an Hylarchick Spirit, that is, I know not what, and to be found I know not when or where, and acts all things I know not how, what should I trouble my self to enquire into that which is never to be understood, and is beyond the reach of my Faculties to comprehend?" (Hooke [1677] [1931] 1968, 187-188).

²⁴ Glanvill [1689] 1966, 9.

More in his *Annotations Upon ... Lux Orientalis ...; and the Discourse of Truth*.²⁵

Baxter denied that More's claims had a sound theological foundation because they were based on the assumption that "God cannot endue matter itself with the formal Virtue of Perception" as well as other active powers.²⁶ Baxter found no inherent contradiction in such a claim, partly because of persistent ambiguities in the terms 'matter' (which sometimes merely referred not to an inert substance, but to the passive element of creatural natures) and 'spirit'.²⁷ Lacking a clear contradiction between perceptive power and properties of matter, Baxter insisted on the possibility of active matter, which is capable of cohesion, gravitation, etc.²⁸ Baxter implicitly accused More of dogmatism, for refusing to leave this possibility open:

I hope Ignorance is never the worse for being confest: All are not so wise as you. I deny it not; but I am not certain that Stones, Earth, and other heavy things, move not to the Earth by a self-moving Principle. I am not sure that if a Stone in the Air fall down, it is by a Spirits motion, and that God hath not made Gravitation, and other aggravative motion of Passives, to be an Essential self-moving Principle.²⁹

²⁵ For additional discussion of this exchange see Henry 1986.

²⁶ Baxter referred to Francis Glisson's work to support the possible activity of matter. Glisson was Regius Professor of Physics at Cambridge who had been active in biological research in the tradition of Harvey. He was a member of both the College of Physicians and the Royal Society (Hall 1990, 198). Glisson's medical philosophy developed the notion that all matter, far from being "dead and senseless," is endowed with a kind of life. Glisson defined life as an intrinsic motility capable of stimulation by perceptivity and appetite or aversion within the matter itself (Glisson 1672, sig. B 2^{v-r}, 234-235). The primary difference between the organic and the inorganic was conceived as degree of organization (Hall 1990, 199). More, of course, reacted to Glisson's views with horror and adamant opposition (*OO* 1:601, 604-611) Baxter suggested that More's indignation was due to an unnecessarily narrow conception of perception, and would disappear were he to expand it to include the unconscious teleological activity of plants whereby they do such things as seek sources of nourishment in the soil, etc. (Baxter 1682b, 25ff.). Baxter also criticized More for confusing Glisson's claim that matter is endowed with active principles with a materialism which would make bare matter to be active (*ibid.*, 37). For more on Glisson's role in this exchange between Baxter and More see Henry 1987.

²⁷ John Webster raised similar objections (Webster 1677, 198ff, esp. 203). For important discussions of the history of the notion of matter, see Clarke 1952 and McMullin 1965. Plotinus' conception of matter is rather complex and the subject of some debate (Deck 1967, 73ff; O'Meara 1975, 56ff.; Lee 1976; and Wagner 1986).

²⁸ Baxter 1682b, 39.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

Further, Baxter charged that More's doctrines contributed to the very impiety they were intended to cure, because they rested on a denial of divine omnipotence.³⁰

What is of particular interest about this exchange is the manner in which shared theological intuitions and commitments were expressed in differing systems of thought and the way in which common terms and models were teased into opposing meanings. Both More and Baxter were committed to constructing an account of mundane reality in which all objects contain an immanent spiritual dimension and all living creatures are governed by a providential order. For More, this required that the divine presence be the absolute space in which all creatures exist and act, that souls be immaterial, and that the natural order be governed by a Spirit of Nature subordinate to God from whom it emanates. Baxter, on the other hand, drew on the More's adored Neoplatonists to show how spiritual immanence could be expressed through a divine efflux or emanation in which lower levels of created being participate in God³¹—a participation through which God's powers are mirrored in the active powers of corporeal beings which are in this way made spiritual. On Baxter's view, it was not necessary to make matter and soul separate substances. Spiritual qualities could be contained in created beings which unite form and matter as ontological principles rather than as conjunctions of distinguishable created substances.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 28.

³¹ More grants that individual beings participate in God's nature as the source of their active powers: "That, whereby a more Lively Impression of his own Excellency, who is altogether Independent, might be stamped upon the Creatures, He gave them a certain Shadow of his own Independency, that is, inward Principles, wherewith they might work: not being moved like your νευρόσπασ[τ]ας, or Pup-pits, whose Motions are from without; but operating according to their own Inward Principles; The Power of God concurring as a universal cause, not by Determination of every Action, but by affording them of his Goodness and Wisdom, such and such Principles" (More 1704, 13). But at the same time, he denies that participation alone is sufficient to establish a providentially ordered cosmos.

³² Baxter 1682b, 86-89 and 92. Another example of alternative notions of spiritual meaning derived from Neoplatonism can be found in More's close friend, Francis Mercury van Helmont, who used notions of participation and emanation to emphasize the union between creatures and God. Responding to More's views on creation, he argued against the coherence of creation *ex nihilo* and in favor of the view that creation is an unfolding of the divine which is "of a spiritual nature, which in a certain respect is immanent, or working within its own self." He defended this account from charges of pantheism by arguing that while the soul may be

This exchange illustrates again that More's anti-enthusiasm was a struggle to control the use of religious symbols and metaphors. The closed meaning of More's metaphors often blinded him to the analogical character of his own thought and led him to attack enthusiasts for using mere metaphors to express religious meaning. Baxter tried to awaken More to this inconsistency, noting that "the very name *Spiritus* which you use is a Metaphor: the first sense being our *Breath à spirando*, or the Air or Wind: Martinus nameth no fewer than Fifteen senses of it."³³

While his attacks on the Quakers and alchemists were an attempt to exercise control over religious language, More's attacks on mechanical enthusiasts aimed to prevent the reduction of the world to inherently meaningless collisions between inanimate particles of matter. A religiously meaningful world would be one in which human actions and character have transcendent moral qualities and where wonder and awe are cognitions of religious realities. It would be one in which the tranquility and peace which descend upon consciousness turned mystically within, as well as the interconnectedness and ontological depth which consciousness sometimes discerns through the appearances of things, are grounded in the deep structure of being.

Some have argued that More himself unwittingly fell into a materialistic account of soul and spirit. The basis of this claim is that the functions of the immaterial soul were duplicated by roles assigned to animal spirits. Latent materialism has also been found in that emphasis upon the necessity of a material instrument or vehicle of the soul, which led his friend Glanvill to claim that

we cannot conceive a Soul to live or act that is insensible, and since we know not how there can be sense where there is no union with matter, we should me seems be induc'd to think, that when 'tis disjunct from all body, 'tis inert and silent. For in all sensations there is corporeal motion.³⁴

Such views, it has been argued, were incompatible with More's claims about the "self-activity" of spirits and resulted from his use

thus understood as "a Particle of the Divine Air, or Breath," nonetheless "the Air or Breath of God doth at least differ from God himself, as the thing principiated or principled differs from its principle" (van Helmont 1682, 9-12, 7).

³³ Baxter 1682b, 78.

³⁴ Glanvill 1682, 103.

of crudely materialistic notions of spirit to make visions of the after-life appealing to a vulgar atheist.³⁵

Such criticisms fall short on at least two accounts. In the first place, More did acknowledge the need for a material medium of spiritual action. But this could certainly qualify as a legitimate metaphysical insight into the difficulties of accounting for interactions between immaterial entities. How, for example, would a spirit learn the thoughts of another in such a way to distinguish them from its own, unless there were some medium through which they were conveyed? Secondly, More's pneumatology did yield an immanent spiritual dimension to reality which, while fully present in the physical world, transcended the pure powers of matter. To some extent it is right to say, as Anderson has, that More was misdirected because his arguments for the existence of spiritual substance do not *ipso facto* establish the spiritual values and meanings which were his *desiderata*.³⁶ However, I have been arguing that More's metaphysics

³⁵ Henry 1986; idem 1987; Walker 1984, 236-240. Henry supports this claim by citing More's reactions to Mortalism, which dealt with problems of the soul's embodiment through a monistic metaphysics which denied the coherence of both non-spatial concepts of the soul and of claims about a disembodied existence (Henry 1986, 193). (For a discussion of mortalism in the seventeenth century see Burns 1972). Henry traces these problems to two other sources as well. In the first place, Henry claims that More is committed to an "intellectualist" theology which contrasts to Baxter's voluntarist account of creatural natures. Baxter, like other Calvinists, was committed the supremacy of will and power in God. He denied limits to the properties which God may bestow upon matter and curtailed the power of the human mind to know such things *a priori*. Henry rightly claims that More, repelled by other aspects of this doctrine, such as the doctrine of predestination which so horrified him in his youth, developed his pneumatology out of a strong belief that God's creative powers can only operate within possibilities discerned by reason (see More 1682, 42-46). As a result, it is claimed that More developed his pneumatology out of a rationalism which emerges from his intellectualist theology (Henry 1986b, 188; Henry 1990, 62ff.). But this does nothing to explain the particularities of More's pneumatology. Further, Henry is simply wrong in his assertion that More was only led to deny the logical possibility of perceptive or living matter because he rejected voluntarist theology (Henry 1986a, 366). Both More and Baxter were agreed that omnipotency cannot create what is logically impossible (eg. Baxter 1682b, 28; *MG* 31-32). Henry also sees materialistic features of More's pneumatology arising from his commitment to Neoplatonic schemes of emanation. But the charge that More's account of the soul is tainted with materialism is questionable; and it is further to be questioned whether emanationist accounts of creation tend to run more towards materialism than towards idealism. Neoplatonism often runs instead to idealism as in Plotinus and Leibniz (see Fouke 1994).

³⁶ This is Anderson's claim: "His object was to establish a realm of spiritual values; what he actually did was to establish a spiritual substance. The nature of that substance seemed unimportant; as a matter of fact, its characteristic qualities dif-

was only one element employed in his dialectical display of religious meaning. And religious and moral concern are at least possibly valid within a metaphysics which introduces causes transcending the mechanical structure of the universe.

One way to evaluate More as a religious and philosophical figure is to trace the later consequences of More's linguistic strategy in connection with the content of his religious thought. More was not advancing his views as a way among others for understanding the basis of spirituality. Rather, he insisted that there is only one religious meaning to be expressed and only one way to express it.³⁷ More recognized that some element of personal experience must enter religion to give it life, and that "with regard to the Christian Religion, they poorly deserve its name who thus indulge a certain jejune and arid reason that entirely excludes every enthusiasm."³⁸ But by insisting that the passions be kept within the strict limits of a particular pattern and that they never be politically disturbing, he made himself party to a movement which had consequences he could hardly have foreseen or approved.

While More was not the first to ridicule the religious radicals and occult philosophers, his attacks had enormous influence. Harth argues that More's primary contribution was to shift the grounds of the attack from accusations of hypocrisy to claims that the enthusiasts were sincere but deluded. As evidence he cites a study by C. M. Webster which found that, among several hundred polemics against the Puritan radicals in the seventeenth century, only Casaubon and More (and those who fell under their influence) depicted the Puritans in this way.³⁹ George Rust, Henry Hallywell, and Joseph Glanvill all acknowledged More's influence on their

ferred, depending on the occasion. ... [A] certain incongruity in explanation gave the impression that More was so anxious to prove the existence of spiritual reality that he failed to define the nature of that reality. He wanted to prove the existence of spiritual being at whatever cost. The result was that the character of that substance was somewhat chameleon-like" (Anderson 1933, 120).

³⁷ More's dogmatism was recognized by many in his own day. Because dogmatism was associated with the radical sects, More's unyielding insistence on the specific details of his pneumatology led many Latitudinarians within the Royal Society to view him as tending towards enthusiasm.

³⁸ *OO* 3:225.

³⁹ Harth 1961, 70. Harth mentions Ben Jonson's "Zeal-of-the-Land Busy" as an early satire on Puritan radicalism. For a discussion of ridicule directed against the Puritans see Holden 1954.

own war against various forms of religious radicalism.⁴⁰ Glanvill argued that the earlier strategy of depicting enthusiasts as hypocrites was ineffective, because

There is nothing whereby the common people are drawn more easily into the ways of Sects and Separations then by the observation of the zeal and devotion of those of the factions. ... For the generality of men are tempted into Schism and Parties, not so much by the arguments of the Fanaticks, as by the opinion of their Godliness.

It was then of no effect to claim that the radicals were only pretending zeal, "for many of ... [the common people] know, that they are in earnest, and consequently that their opposers are mistaken in their judgments concerning them." So then, it should be granted

that they may be serious, believe themselves infinitely, and feel all those Warmths, which they pretend and yet be evil men, and far enough from being Godly [because] all their zeal and Devotion, and more and greater than theirs, may arise from a principle that hath nothing Divine and supernatural in it.⁴¹

The writings of Hickes, Locke, Swift, Addison, Shaftesbury, and others reflect More's strategy of treating enthusiasts as sincere but deluded.

Many Anglicans followed More in emphasizing the rationality of Christianity. Increasingly this meant that access to God was through rational inference rather than illumination. Central to this theological program was research in natural philosophy which aimed to establish the character of the ordinary course of nature. Knowledge of God was to be facilitated by the work of the experimentalists who would lead others to admiration of the deity by discovering "the wonderful contrivance of the Creation."⁴² The sober knowledge of creation supplied by the New Philosophy was designed to protect the ignorant from credulity and so from enthusiasm, because

He cannot suddenly conclude all extraordinary events to be the immediate Finger of God, because he familiarly beholds the inward workings of things: and thence perceives that many effects, which use to

⁴⁰ Rust 1683, 33; Glanvill 1671, 223-224; Hallywell 1673, 104-111. For a discussion of More's influence on later theological attacks against Methodism and on Swift see Harth 1961.

⁴¹ Glanvill 1670, 145-149.

⁴² Sprat [1667] 1958, 349.

affright the Ignorant, are brought forth by the common Instruments of Nature. ... He cannot be forward to assent to Spiritual Raptures, and Revelations: because he is truly acquainted with the Tempers of mens Bodies, the Composition of their Blood, and the power of Fancy: and so better understands the difference, between Diseases, and Inspirations.⁴³

The resulting conception of religion was diametrically opposed to that of the radicals and Rosicrucians. The miraculous and charismatic elements of religion were confined to a time in the past, which differed from the present dispensation in which God is no longer immediately involved with the world in extraordinary ways. The charismatic religion of the radicals and the Rosicrucians was said to harm religion, because it “goes neer to bring down the price of the True, and Primitive Miracles, by such a vast, and such a negligent augmenting of their number.”⁴⁴ By the late seventeenth century it was considered orthodox to claim that the age of both miracles and prophecy had ended.

After a long struggle by the Quakers to secure religious toleration leading to George Whitehead’s interview with Charles II in 1672, George Fox established the Second-Day’s Morning Meeting in London. The central function of this group was to approve manuscripts submitted for publication, but its leaders soon turned to the extirpation of enthusiasm from among the Quakers themselves. There exist many records of their rejection and alterations of manuscripts to this purpose. The edited version of George Fox’s *Journal* (the publication of which was assigned and supervised by the Morning meeting) was a shadow of the version Fox had dictated, and his other works were similarly revised both in style and content. Various enthusiastical tracts were omitted in collections of the Quakers’ writings.⁴⁵ By 1700 even the Quakers came to see prophecy as odd.

By 1724, the common lawyers made the prevailing opinion official by ruling it an offence to claim extraordinary commissions from God or to frighten people with threats of divine judgment. Keith Thomas has characterized this transition by saying that whereas in the sixteenth century “the claims of a would-be prophet would always be seriously investigated, even if ultimately exposed as

⁴³ Ibid., 358-359.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 352ff., and 362.

⁴⁵ Cope 1971, 227.

groundless," by the eighteenth century "the majority of educated men concurred in dismissing them *a priori* as inherently ridiculous.⁴⁶ More set the tone for numerous later attacks on threatening forms of religious spirituality. These attacks often cited More and followed him in associating intense religiosity with uncontrolled passion and imagination, as well as madness.⁴⁷ More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* was last published in 1739, apparently as a tool against the rising tide of Methodism.⁴⁸

In connecting claims of divine inspiration with madness, moral defect, and physiological disfunction, not only were the religious radicals and alchemists like Vaughan stigmatized and silenced, but also the configuration of psychological normalcy was changed to emphasize sobriety, self-control, and the suppression of the imagination. In the period succeeding the accession of William and Mary, not only an unusual degree of religious zeal but even violations of accepted standards of taste and behavior were regarded as dangerously enthusiastic.⁴⁹ Anti-enthusiasts sought to purge "enthusiasm" not only from religion and politics, but from rhetoric and literature as well.⁵⁰ The temperament of society itself changed in the wake of anti-enthusiasm.⁵¹

Later in the seventeenth century, John Toland turned the Anglican emphasis on rational Christianity into an attack on Christian mysteries.⁵² During the controversy which followed Toland, Anthony Collins, Mathew Tindal and other "deists" used some of the religious values More had developed to cast suspicion on the priesthood. Priests were depicted as conspiring to achieve political pow-

⁴⁶ Thomas 1971, 145-146.

⁴⁷ See the introduction by M. V. DePorte in More [1662] 1966, v. Examples of such attacks include Nathaniel Lancaster, *Methodism Triumphant* (London: 1767); Francis Hutchinson, *A Short View of the Pretended Spirit of Prophecy* (London: 1708); Archibald Cambell, *A Discourse Proving that the Apostles were no Enthusiasts* (London: 1730); G. Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* (London: 1749). More might, with some plausibility, be credited or blamed for influencing Western attitudes towards consciousness.

⁴⁸ See the introduction by M. V. DePorte in More [1662] 1966, v).

⁴⁹ Lee 1931, 119.

⁵⁰ Heyd 1981 263-265.

⁵¹ Bristow 1977; Bahlman 1957; Curtis and Speck 1976. The revolt against enthusiasm of the 1650's, in which More played a significant role, has been linked to the ideology of the Royal Society in the 1660's and the later development of the Newtonian ideology in reaction to the enthusiasm of the French Prophets (J. R. Jacob 1974, 1978, 1980, J. R. Jacob and M. Jacob. 1980; M. Jacob 1976; Schaffer 1987).

⁵² Toland [1696] 1984, 131-133.

er by exploiting superstition, encouraging enthusiastic belief in mysteries, and stymieing the rational criticism of religion. And, by treating the Bible as an historical text which, like any other such text, had to be investigated and analyzed through rational methods, the deists undermined its supernatural authority and the historicity of its narratives.⁵³

More was not the first to “medicalize madness.” Even in the tradition of Galenic medicine mania was explained as a corporeal disequilibrium which could be treated with drugs. But More contributed greatly to the cognitive nullification of religious experience. The ecstatic visions of God, nature, and the self, the revelations of a society freed from institutionalized oppression, the sense of a divine light within all bringing all to moral judgment were all reduced to surds. The result was that the voices from beyond become “news from nowhere, with nothing to say either about God’s will or even the subjective inner consciousness. Passionate religious experience was then reduced to a state of consciousness less informative than even dreams, which, since Freud at least, might be taken to provide some insight into inner motivations and conflicts.”⁵⁴

This whole development is an ironic or tragic consequence of More’s anti-enthusiastical strategy, since More (ever opposed to “dry” religiosity) never intended to discredit altogether the experiential basis of spirituality or to remove feeling from religion. He found religious satisfaction in moments of ecstasy, discovered spiritual delight in certain “divine sensations” which accompanied contemplation, and experienced the world as a providential order. His anti-enthusiasm was intended to exhibit the spiritual vectors of his own religious experiences and to explain the origin of their noetic qualities. But the methods he used to display the distastefulness of certain manifestations of religious passion and imagination were eventually used by others to discredit the very kinds of religious feeling he valued. More unwittingly advanced a form of impiety which he himself hated, namely “Rituality ..., by which a Man, while he is observing those exterior Rights of God, and adheres with a sort of Conscience to things ceremonial; does in the mean time freeze, as to any spiritual Feeling or internal Worship of God.”⁵⁵

⁵³ For what is still the best survey of these events see Leslie [1876] 1949.

⁵⁴ Porter 1983, 40-41.

⁵⁵ *EE* 122.

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Abbreviations of Works which are Frequently Cited:

(a) Works of More

AA: *An Antidote Against Atheism*. The edition cited is that found in volume I of *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.

CC: *Conjectura Cabbalistica*. The edition cited is that found in volume II of *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.

CP: *The Complete Poems*.

CSPW: *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.

DD: *Divine Dialogues*.

DST: *Discourses on Several Texts of Scripture By the Late Pious and Learned Henry More*.

EE: *Enchiridion Ethicum*. Unless otherwise indicated, the text referred to by this abbreviation will be the English translation of 1690: *An Account of Virtue: or, Dr. Henry More's Abridgment of Morals, Put into English*.

ET: *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*. Unless otherwise indicated, the edition cited is that found in volume I of *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.

IS: *The Immortality of the Soul*. The edition cited is that found in volume II of *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.

LPM: *Letters Philosophical and Moral between the Author and Dr. Henry More*. In John Norris, *The Theory and Regulation of Love*.

MG: *An Explanation of The grand Mystery of Godliness*.

OO: *Opera Omnia*.

OT: *Opera Theologica*.

TNS: *The Easie, True, and Genuine Notion, and consistent Explication of the Nature of a Spirit*.

(b) Other items

AT: *Oeuvres de Descartes*.

DNB: *Dictionary of National Biography*.

EN: Plotinus. *Enneads*.

OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*.

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INDEX

- Affections 45–6, 77, 89, 103–4
 Agrippa von Nettesheim, Henry Cornelius 54, 54n, 63, 69, 70n, 87–8, 94
 Allegory 23–7, 41–49, 114–6
 Ancient Theology 55–6
 Anderson, Paul 229
 Aquinas: and emanation 30n, 206–7n, 220n
 Ashmole, Elias 52, 67n
 Astral body (*See* Astrology; Soul, vehical of) 168–9n
 Astrology 70, 86–7
 Atheism 105–6, 118, 122, 157, 172–3, 179–80, 181–4, 205, 208, 216

 Bakhtin, Mikhail 16, 224
 Barrow, Isaac 185, 185n
 Baxter, Richard 112n, 113, 117–8, 137, 148, 225–8, 229n
 Beaumont, Joseph 3
 Boehme, Jacob 28n, 52, 86n, 133, 182–3, 217, 221
 Boyle, Robert 2, 3, 4, 12, 183, 209n, 213, 225n
 Burke, Kenneth 16, 27–8, 39n, 224
 Burthogge, Richard 207n
 Burton, Robert: *Anatomy of Melancholy* 8–9, 167n

 Calvert, Giles 132
 Casaubon, Isaac 55–6
 Casaubon, Meric 12, 98, 100, 126, 151, 169n, 170–5, 182n, 230
 Castellio, Sebastian 166n
 Chillingworth, William 5
 Collins, Anthony 5, 233
 Comenius, John Amos 2, 52
 Conway, Anne 4, 34–5n, 155, 170, 175–7, 184–5
 Crocker, Robert 1n, 13, 19, 32n, 165–6n, 221
 Cudworth, Ralph 4, 28n, 110, 183, 183n, 206–7n, 208n, 209n, 217

 D'Espagne, Jean 54, 54n, 60n, 60–2, 64–7, 73–6, 85, 89n, 205
 Dante 25
 Danto, Arthur 10
 Dee, John 50, 64n, 126, 171, 172–3

 Deiformity. *See* Soul, rebirth and Deiformity
 Deism 5, 233
 Descartes, René 2, 4, 10, 12, 96, 100, 109n, 109–12, 151, 183–9, 194, 198, 200, 204n, 209n, 216
 Diggers (*See* Winstanley, Gerrard) 130, 132, 147

 Elys, Edmund 5
 Emanation: in creation 25–9, 208n, 209n, 220n; in the animation of the universe 31–35, 206, 206–7n, 208n; in intellectual illumination 69–71, 81n, 89–90n; and organic and chemical metaphors 56–61; and participation 29–31, 224, 227; in the soul 36–9, 45, 197–203; in the trinity 28–9;
 Enthusiasm, passim
 Everard, John 52n, 134

 Familism 52n, 131–2, 132n, 152n, 152–3, 154n, 176
 Family of Love. *See* Familism
 Fernel, Jean 70n, 80
 Ficino 7, 19, 35, 42, 50, 55, 1–7
 Fifth Monarchy Men 130, 152n
 First Matter 57–61, 63, 66n, 72
 Fludd, Robert 50, 52–4, 57n, 60n, 65n, 71, 75n, 80n, 84n, 92–3
 Fox, George 133, 140–1, 145–9, 154–5, 232
 Friends. *See* Quakers

 Gabbey, Alan 110, 183, 189n, 208n
 Geertz, Clifford 47
 Geertz, Hildred 10n, 81
 Gell, Robert 1, 1n, 166n
 Ghosts 4, 171–173, 193
 Glanvill, Joseph 4n, 4–5, 87–8, 172, 173n, 183, 225, 228, 230–1
 Glisson, Francis 226, 226n

 Hale, Matthew 225
 Hall, John 185
 Hallywell, Henry 5, 132n, 230
 Hartlib, Samuel 2, 2n, 4, 110, 110n
 Henry, John 229, 229n
 Hermes, Trismegistus 12–13, 19, 23,

- 28n, 32, 57n, 68n, 69n, 72-3, 78-80, 100, 100n, 111n, 220
 Heydon, John 178, 178n
 Hobbes, Thomas 3-4, 20, 114n, 167n, 181, 182, 184n, 188, 204-5n
 Hooke, Robert 225n
 Hooker, Richard 156
 Humoral Theory 5-9, 37, 119-23, 167-9
 Ideas 24, 36-9, 114, 161; Divine, 81
 Imagination 6-7, 36, 45-6, 50, 86-90, 102, 104-9, 114-6, 119-22, 127-9, 144-7, 159, 164, 168-9, 181-2, 199-200, 207, 210; Divine 33-9, 34n, 58
 Intellect 39-41, 45, 68n, 69-70, 161, 163, 165, 203; Divine 29
 Keith, George 12, 176
 Koyré, Alexandre 27-8, 67n
 Leibniz, Gottfried W. 192n, 199n, 229n
 Light. *See* Metaphysics of Light
 Light of Nature 81-90, 91-2n
 Macrocosm/Microcosm 26-7, 36, 48, 65-6n, 68-71, 89n, 90n
 Matter (*See* Spirit and matter), 31-5, 57n, 58-61, 110, 185-94, 224-6
 Mede, Joseph 1, 1n, 152n
 Melancholy 5-9, 20, 22, 105, 121-2, 166-75
 Metaphor 23-4, 29, 47-9, 113-9, 138, 208n, 217-8, 223; chemical metaphors 57; organic metaphors 40-9, 62, 134, 216, 220, 228
 Metaphysics of Light 63-7, 69, 117, 134
 Methodism 5, 233
 Moray, Robert 53
 More, Henry, *passim*; *Antidote Against Atheisme* 2, 187-195, 198-201, 213-218; *Apology* 3; *Collection of Philosophical Writings* 2, 187-8n; *Conjectura Cabbalistica* 2, 114, 202; *Divine Dialogues* 3, 208, 214; *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* 2, 160, 183-4, 184n, 196n, 214; *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* 2, 98-9, 101, 119-23, 130, 151-2, 170, 174-5, 182, 233; *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* 3, 12, 151-3, 152n; *Immortality of the Soul* 2, 185, 192, 197; *Opera Omnia* 2, 18, 47, 188n, 192n, 206n; *Psychodia Platonica* 1-2, 18-49, 99, 100n, 103, 107, 110, 113, 117, 128, 183-5, 197, 208, 215n, 217; *Easie, True and Genuine Notion ... of a Spirit* 4, 112n, 113, 117-8, 225; enthusiasm of 19, 21-2, 43, 51, 124-5, 127-9
 Münster rebellion 131-2, 150
 Münzer, Thomas 131
 Naylor, James 137, 150, 153n
 Neoplatonism 12, 24, 27-32, 47-8, 50, 55-8, 70n, 78n, 90n, 99-100, 134, 151, 166n, 174, 202, 205-7n, 209n, 211, 227, 227n, 229n
 Newton, Isaac 4, 185
 Niclaes Henrik 131-2
 Norris, John 5, 5n, 159, 161
 Origen 16
 Paracelsus 52, 54, 57-8n, 58-9n, 60n, 68n, 70-2, 76-7n, 79n, 81n, 82n, 85n, 87n, 89n
 Parker, Samuel 3, 3n, 114-5, 178-9, 183-4n
 Participation (*See* Emanation), 30-1, 32n, 36, 39, 45, 71, 79, 104, 128, 133-6, 138-9, 147n, 147-9, 153, 155, 161, 201, 224, 227, 227n
 Passions 6-9, 42 44-6, 77, 86-90, 104, 114-6, 119-22, 127-9, 144-7, 157-9, 160-2, 165, 167, 181, 183, 183n, 216, 218, 222
 Penn, William 148
 Perfectionism 151, 165-6n
 Petty, William 110-2
Physis. *See* Spirit of Nature
 Plato 12, 55, 99n, 151, 168n, 174
 Plotinus 13, 19, 22, 55-6, 78n, 164n, 174, 209n, 210n, 211, 211n, 229n
Pneuma (*See* Spirit and matter) 33n, 37-8
 Pneumatology 3-4, 37-8, 181-218, 221, 225, 229, 229n
 Porta, John Baptista 56, 85n, 120
 Power, Henry 185
 Prisca Theologia. *See* Ancient Theology
 Proclus 30-1, 209n
Psyche. *See* Trinity
 Quakers 3, 9, 12-13, 97n, 98-9, 100, 130-80, 181, 219-21, 228, 232

- Randall, Giles 181n
 Ranters 130, 149–50, 221
 Ray, John 5, 184n
 Reason (*See* Soul) 40, 42–5, 69–70, 73, 90, 90–1n, 99–100, 102, 104, 108–9, 119, 145, 156–66, 169, 181–2, 188–92, 200, 210, 219–21
 Religious Radicals 2, 5–6, 8–9, 43, 51, 97n, 98, 122–3, 130–80, 181–3, 219–221, 232–3
 Riolan, Jean 167n
 Ripley, George 100n
 Robins, John 149–50
 Robinson, Thomas 5
 Rosicrucianism 51–4, 67–8, 92n, 96–7, 126n, 133, 178–9, 232
 Royal Society 3–5, 179, 183–4n, 193n
 Rust, George 230

 Seekers 97n, 137
 Seminal forms 33–5, 62, 64, 78, 83n, 106–7, 195, 216, 221n
 Sendivogius, Michael 50, 54n, 61n, 65n, 68n, 74, 76, 82, 85–6n, 89n, 93n, 220n
 Signatures 35, 56, 56n, 61, 73–4, 81–2, 191, 207n
 Soul (*See* Affections; Deiformity; Imagination; Intellect; Passions) 23, 25, 35–9, 63, 69–70, 77, 86–90, 109, 116–23, 144, 147, 156, 159–69, 172, 174, 192, 228; boniform faculty of 122, 158–66, 222–3; hylopathy of 37–9; plastic powers of 37, 37n, 194, 201–3, 205–6, 212–3; vehical of 33, 36–9, 42, 45–6, 70, 87n, 119n, 122–3, 168–9, 199, 200–3, 211, 228; emanation and the soul's structure 25–6, 39–40; extension of 185–7, 195–6; indiscernability of 196–7; rebirth and Deiformity 26, 39–41, 101, 104–9, 124, 158–66, 177–8, 204, 216, 222; vital union of with bodies 197–203, 210–2, 216–7
 Spenser, Edmund 24–5
 Spinoza 181, 184n
 Spirit and matter 12, 34, 36–8, 46, 62–8, 73n, 73–6, 85, 105, 112–3, 118–23, 168n, 172, 181, 190n, 195, 197–218, 205–8, 211–2, 221, 225–8
 Spirit of Nature 2–3, 12, 33n, 34–5, 100n, 109n, 106–7, 106n, 188–9, 195n, 204–15, 217, 225n
 Spirits. *See* Pneumatology; Spirit and matter
 Sprat, Thomas 178–9, 231
 Stillingfleet, Edward 5, 5n, 183–4n
 Stoicism 33, 44, 89, 164n
 Sympathy 33–5, 38, 40, 89, 201–2, 211–2, 216

 Thomas, Keith 220, 232
Theologia Germanica 19, 52n, 181n
 Tindal, Matthew 5, 233
 Toland, John 233
 Trinity 28–9, 113–4, 136, 136n, 156, 192; *Aeon* (the Son) 28–9; *Ahad* (the Father) 28–9; *Psyche* (the Holy Spirit) 25, 29, 35–6, 37, 25, 29, 32–5, 58n, 100n

 Van Helmont, Francis Mercury 4, 12, 175, 192n, 193n, 227n
 Vaughan, Thomas 2, 5–6, 10, 12–13, 49, 50–132 passim 136, 146, 151n, 178, 181, 183, 187, 216, 217, 220, 221, 224, 233
 Vehicle. *See* Soul, vehical of
 Vital congruity 211, 221n

 Webster, John 79–80n, 84, 88, 96n, 97n, 126, 133–4, 142, 147, 172–3, 226n
 White, Haydon 10, 17
 Wier, Johann 171–2
 Willis, Thomas 88, 88n
 Winstanley, Gerrard (*See* Diggers) 130, 132, 147
 Witches 4, 171–3, 193
 World-Soul (*See* Spirit of Nature) 62, 66n, 89n